

Mr. Sorcar (Bangladesh): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. My delegation commends the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. John Holmes, for his comprehensive briefing this morning.

Civilians continue to suffer the brunt of violence during armed conflicts. Civilians have become the primary target of attacks that are often motivated by ethnic or religious hatred, political confrontation or simply the ruthless desire of the perpetrators to attack a member of an opposing group. These civilians are displaced from their homes and are often denied access to life-saving food, medicine and shelter. It is against this backdrop that the States Members of the Organization pledged in the Millennium Declaration “to expand and strengthen the protection of civilians in complex emergencies”.

The Council has been discussing this important issue for nearly a decade and has adopted many resolutions and heard strong and relevant statements by delegates. However, ironically, a large number of civilians continue to be exposed to the atrocities of conflict. My delegation urges all parties to conflicts to ensure protection of the lives and property of civilians. The Council should also strengthen its efforts to prevent, resolve and reduce armed conflicts, pursuant to its primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security.

My delegation condemns all violations of international humanitarian and human rights law and stresses the need to combat impunity, safeguard access

for humanitarian assistance and protect the safety of humanitarian aid workers.

We are appalled by the scale and intensity of the devastation and the deaths of innocent Palestinians, including women and children, caused by the indiscriminate and excessive use of force in the Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip. It is disconcerting to see that even humanitarian workers are being killed by the Israeli attackers. The ongoing attacks, in continued defiance of the Council’s call for a complete ceasefire, are contributing to continued civilian casualties.

My delegation wishes to draw the international community’s attention to the fact that Israel, as a signatory to the relevant provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which stipulates the responsibilities of an occupying Power, cannot legally or morally absolve itself of its responsibilities for guaranteeing the basic human rights of the people under its occupation. In this regard, my delegation would like to re-emphasize the importance of the principle of the responsibility to protect, as endorsed in the 2005 World Summit Outcome, in preventing harm to civilians in armed conflict.

The vulnerable situation of civilians in post- conflict societies needs special attention. Long after guns have fallen silent, such people remain traumatized and permanently scarred by the brutalities of war. For peace to be sustained, they must be rehabilitated and reintegrated into their communities more effectively, and the perpetrators must bear the resultant cost. The Peace building Commission should also include this issue in its agenda whenever it takes up a country- specific configuration.

Finally, we would like to mention what my delegation considers two overarching themes

for the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The first relates to prevention and the building of a culture of peace. Prevention is at the heart of protection. The preventive capacity of the Organization must be enhanced. At the same time, Member States need to take steps to inculcate the values of peace, tolerance and harmony that contribute to long-term prevention.

The second theme is that of coordination among all stakeholders. We believe that the protection of civilians is the primary justification for a United Nations presence in the field. However, various political, humanitarian, military and development components of United Nations missions in the field lack an integrated focus on the protection of civilians. Indeed, protection should be one of the main mandates of any United Nations mission in the field, whether it be a peacekeeping, political or peacebuilding mission. Work should begin on crafting clear guidelines for effective coordination, particularly among the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA).

In conclusion, my delegation once again expresses its grave concern over the deteriorating humanitarian situation caused by the ongoing Israeli attacks in and around the Gaza Strip. Israel must comply with resolution 1860 (2009). My delegation strongly urges the international community, particularly the Council, to take effective steps to ensure implementation of that resolution and thereby bring about a complete ceasefire in the Gaza Strip forthwith.