

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti,
Permanent Representative of Brazil
to the United Nations

Open debate of the Security Council on "Protection of
civilians in armed conflict"
7 July 2010

Madam President,

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive statement. I also thank Under-Secretary-General John Holmes and High Commissioner Navi Pillay for their briefings this morning.

Brazil would like to join you, Madam President, and previous speakers in paying special tribute to Sir John Holmes. We have greatly appreciated his work. During his tenure, we went through numerous humanitarian crises. His leadership and dedication made the response of the international community more effective and the suffering of those affected less unbearable. We wish him every success in his future endeavours.

Madam President,

Brazil attaches great importance to the protection of civilians in all its aspects. We have sought to actively contribute to the many dimensions of this issue, including the questions of humanitarian access; improving compliance with humanitarian, refugee, and human rights law; strengthening the International Criminal Court; and promoting the well-being of internally displaced persons, among others. Today, I wish to focus on the protection of civilians by peacekeeping operations.

This year's report by the C-34 demonstrated the growing consensus on the importance of the protection of civilians by peacekeepers. It encouraged the Secretariat to continue its conceptual and operational work in this area, including through the preparation of training modules. We deem it very important that DPKO continue engaging closely with TCCs and PCCs throughout this process.

The C-34 also requested the Secretariat to prepare strategic frameworks for mission-wide protection strategies. These strategies are particularly important inasmuch as they reinforce the fact that protection of civilians is a multidimensional task. They should clarify the relevant protection roles of all mission components, including Police, Human Rights, Civil Affairs, and Public Information.

Madam President,

The Council has been very clear regarding the priority it attaches to the task of protecting civilians. Nevertheless, we must ask ourselves if this priority is adequately reflected in the means and resources that are given to those responsible for making protection a reality on the ground.

On the military side, we must continue to consider issues such as training, guidance, oversight mechanisms, intelligence, dissemination of information on International Humanitarian Law, and use of non-lethal armaments and techniques.

We must also ensure, however, that the civilian aspects of the mission receive equal attention, including in terms of adequate staffing and guidance materials. The Secretariat and the General Assembly must work together to ensure that civilian components of missions are properly backstopped at Headquarters.

Civilian components play a central role in the preventive dimension of

protection efforts by peacekeeping missions. Missions must work together with other actors, particularly those in the areas of development and human rights, to create a protective environment. In addition, establishing a positive, two-way dialogue with the local population is an important factor in ensuring the sustainability of post-conflict peace and stability.

Madam President,

The debate on the protection of civilians by peacekeeping operations should not be read as a false opposition between protection and other mandated tasks. When confronted with gross violations of human rights, peacekeepers face a moral obligation to act. Moreover, standing by while such abuses are committed can imperil the mission's credibility in the eyes of other actors and compromise its ability to fulfill other mandated tasks.

On the other hand, a mission that protects civilians under imminent threat, but makes no progress in helping address the underlying causes of the conflict or in peacebuilding tasks will not lead to a sustainable peace. Helping States onto the path of peace, stability and development is, ultimately, the best way for the United Nations to contribute to the long-term protection of civilians.

Madam President,

The protection of civilians by peacekeeping missions is one dimension of a multifaceted issue. Many others deserve careful attention by the relevant bodies. Among these, I would cite: how to ensure compensation for damages caused to civilian victims of conflicts, even when they derive from actions committed in accordance with international law; how to preserve cultural, collective, and community rights in situations of armed conflict; and how to strengthen local mechanisms of justice, monitoring, and prevention.

My delegation is ready to work with other Member States and the UN system in order to address these and other central questions in our collective strategy to ensure the adequate protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Thank you very much