

## **Colombia - Statement to the Security Council, Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict**

**9 November 2011**

Mr. Osorio (Colombia) (spoke in Spanish): I extend the warmest welcome to His Excellency Mr. Aníbal António Cavaco Silva, President of the Republic of Portugal, and thank him for participating in the work of the Council earlier today. I also thank Ms. Navanethem Pillay, Ms. Catherine Bragg and Mr. Philip Spoerri for their important briefings and contributions to help us consider and analyse the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

We would also like to thank the Permanent Mission of Portugal for having convened this meeting and organized, together with the Office for the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs, last week's workshop, which furnished valuable elements for addressing the topic at hand.

Colombia reiterates its commitment to respecting and protecting civilians in armed conflict. In this regard, our Government has made every possible effort. The consolidation of the rule of law is the most solid foundation for creating conditions to protect individuals and guarantee the full enjoyment of their personal rights.

The fact that the topic of the protection of civilians in armed conflict has remained on the agenda of the Security Council for more than a decade suggests that there is a need for this executive organ of the Organization to play a bigger role in protecting civilian populations when they fall victim to violent and systematic repression by their own authorities, as was the case in Libya. Furthermore, these activities are a valuable complement to contributions and developments originating in other bodies, such as the

General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the Economic and Social Council.

The General Assembly in particular, through its Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, recognizes in its report A/65/19 that the mandates of several United Nations peacekeeping missions currently include a civilian protection component. That document establishes the guidelines to be followed in order to appropriately accomplish those tasks, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

With respect to the adoption of mandates related to the protection of civilians in situations on the Council's agenda, we stress the importance of taking into consideration the strengthening of national capacities. The report of the Special Committee of Peacekeeping Operations itself stresses that the protection of civilians is first and foremost the responsibility of the host State. Therefore, peacekeeping missions entrusted with that mandate should carry out their work without undermining the responsibility of the host Government to protect its civilian population. The strength of the State as an institution and support for the actions of national authorities are the bases for guaranteeing the effective protection of civilians in contexts of violence.

In the search for lasting peace and stability that can make a long-term difference, the Security Council should enhance its coordination with other bodies and agencies of the system. In this context, it would be wise to undertake sustained efforts and to adopt comprehensive approaches that offer possibilities for cooperation to meet problems that at times represent highly complex challenges. The specific measures adopted by the Security Council in situations submitted for its consideration lead to precise actions that are adapted to the context and circumstances of each situation.

It goes without saying that these considerations are all the more relevant when the Council considers reports on situations other than those already on its agenda. Colombia wishes to stress that, when considering this point, the Council needs to maintain a clear distinction between situations that are included on its agenda and those that are not. In this sense, it is advisable that, when addressing the protection of civilians in specific situations, the Council act to strengthen national institutions.

