



STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR MANJEEV SINGH PURI, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, ON THE THEMATIC DEBATE ON 'PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS' AT THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL ON JULY 07, 2010

Madam President,

India would like to thank the Nigerian Presidency for organizing this thematic debate on the Protection of Civilians. In our understanding, this is a theme that falls within the broader rubric of peacekeeping, which with more than 100,000 peacekeepers and a US\$ 8 billion budget, remains the most visible operational activity of the United Nations. The fact that both the Security Council and the General Assembly have organized thematic debates on peacekeeping within two weeks of each other is a reflection of the centrality of peacekeeping to both the Council and to the Assembly.



DDR AT SECURITY COUNCIL
courtesy UN Photos

This is the second time in less than a year that the Council is debating the issue of Protection of Civilians. There has been considerable movement in the normative sphere in the intervening period during these debates. Protection of Civilians and other associated concepts have been discussed in detail by the Member States during the deliberations of the C-34. Work is also underway on developing operational doctrines that will actually bring succour to the weak and the helpless in the face of violence and conflict. The debate is no longer on “if” we protect civilians; it is about the “how” of protecting them.

My delegation is in favour of intergovernmental discussions to develop the normative and operational framework for Protection of Civilians. We stand ready and willing, as our record establishes, to engage. We would, however, like to caution against the tendency, evident in recent debates on important strategies, to pay lip-service to or even by-pass the consultative process that is built into a multilateral-decision making structure. These attempts will fail and will undermine the trust and credibility that are integral to the efficient and effective functioning of the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support.

Madam President,

International humanitarian law, particularly those provisions that protect civilians, arose to deal with the terrible suffering of civilians in war. The Security Council, in its wisdom, attempted to apply some of the provisions of these laws to intra-state conflict. Unfortunately, the situation in the ground in the areas where the UN operates is not entirely satisfactory. Civilians continue to suffer today. It is the non-belligerents who continue to bear the brunt of violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The operational reasons behind the UN’s inability to fully translate the Security Council’s intent to protect civilians on the ground have been spelt out with clarity and precision by the Independent Study commissioned by DPKO last year. It is clear that the major share of the blame lies with the Security Council itself. It has been unable, over more than a decade, to develop a clear understanding of the nature and extent of the problem; has been unable to give clear directions to the DPKO about what it wants and what and how DPKO should operate; and has not taken into account the experience and inputs of countries whose troops are actually on the ground. As the report succinctly states, the “confusion over the Council’s intent is evident in the lack of policy, guidance, planning and preparedness.”

Representing a country which has been an active participant in UN peacekeeping since 1956 and has contributed more than 100,000 peacekeepers to 40 UN operations, my delegation cannot claim to be surprised by the findings.

Madam President,

More than 8,000 Indian peacekeepers are on the ground, as I speak here, protecting civilians in some of the most challenging operational environments. They operate in situations where violence is low-intensity and often confusing, where belligerents are not necessarily combatants under international humanitarian law, where information is deficient, and where resources and infrastructure are woefully inadequate. Working within these deficiencies, our men and women are trying their utmost to prevent conflict and stabilize post-conflict situations.

Madam President,

My delegation finds that peacekeepers on the ground find it difficult to connect to the debates taking place here. They find that there is insufficient appreciation of the operational challenges of actually executing the mandates of the Security Council. They find that there is an emphasis on normative aspects rather than on implementation. They find that they are being asked to do more and more with less.

80% of peacekeeping resources today are devoted to operations that are more than 5 years old. These operations are being called upon to transition into peacebuilding even as they have not entirely overcome the challenges of peacekeeping. In this context, the normative debate associated with protection of civilians stands the risk of becoming a debate on the strategy to fight yesterday's battle.

Madam President,

We are meeting in the shadow of a demand for reduced UN presence in certain key operational areas. It is unlikely that this demand arises out of the success of the United Nations. It is more likely that the United Nations is now of limited relevance in responding to the challenges facing national authorities as they struggle to consolidate peace. There is no better way of protecting civilians than by consolidating peace.

Debates on issues such as "strategic" consent will not be found helpful by national authorities. This is not what host countries want when they are struggling to build institutions and stimulate economic growth.

Attempts to obfuscate the difference between Chapter VI and Chapter VII of the charter do not serve the ideal of peacekeeping. There is a time and a place for both and back-door efforts to evade the Council's special responsibilities, while retaining its privileges, will affect the credibility of the institution.

Madam President,

There is only so much that peacekeepers and the DPKO can do. It is important to remember – at all times – that the primary responsibility of maintaining peace under a Chapter VI operation is that of the host government. The role of the United Nations is to support these authorities in accordance with their priorities and relevant to ground realities.

We hear from national authorities that the Office of the Rule of Law is now as important as that of the military component in protecting civilians. We also hear that an augmented police presence is required while the Security Sector is being reformed. Security Sector Reform must be driven by national requirements and not by donor priorities. The capacity driven approach that is being adopted needs to become an exercise of understanding and providing what host governments require, not an exercise in collating what donors can give. Security Sector Reform will fail to consolidate the hard earned gains of peacekeeping unless it is based on organic growth and related to the realities of the developing world.

There are countries that have overcome post-colonial challenges similar to those we are concerned with today. There are nations that have faced these obstacles in democratic and open settings while giving primacy to Human Rights and the rule of law. We need to look at such examples.

Madam President,

The success of the Indian female Formed Police Unit in Liberia is testimony to the power of an example that is relevant to ground realities.

In conclusion, Madam President, let me thank you again for organizing this debate. India is committed to contribute, through its peacekeepers and its national capacities, to the promotion of peace and security and to the role of the United Nations.

Thank you.

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