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Security Council on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict - Open Debate - Statement by H.E. Ambassador Cesare Maria Ragaglini Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations (New York, July 7 2010)

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 Madame President, I wish to thank you for convening this debate.

I also would like to express my deep appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Holmes for his briefing, which gives us an overarching picture of the challenges we face in the protection of civilians in armed conflict. I seize this opportunity to commend his tireless commitment in defending the lives of civilians victims of conflicts worldwide and wish him all the best for his future endeavors. I also wish to thank High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navanethem Pillay, for her contribution. Italy fully associates itself with the statement which will be delivered by the acting Head of the EU Delegation on behalf of the European Union. I will start by focusing on some of the main concerns in the field of protection of civilians. A number of persistent violators of human rights and humanitarian law still go unpunished. Accountability is a central issue. The Council must be ready to take action against those who continuously undermine the credibility of its commitment. The International Criminal Court has an important role to play as well. In this respect, Italy welcomes the outcome of the recent review conference in Kampala that further strengthened the ICC's role. We also share the concern about the lack of progress in finding durable solutions to the situation of IDPs. A more comprehensive approach is needed, that looks both at the most urgent as well as at the long term problems, such as land and property issues, which are key in addressing the causes of conflict. As far as positive developments are concerned, the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict is certainly a crucial step in addressing what is one of the most serious threats to the protection of civilians. We strongly support the mandate of Ms. Wallström and we look forward to assisting her in this challenging task. We also welcome the recent briefing of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict to the Security Council Sanctions Committee on the Democratic Republic of Congo. Protection of civilians, particularly of those pertaining to the most vulnerable categories, must be an integral part of the work of the Sanctions Committee. We hope that such briefings will gradually become a standard practice. Moreover, let me express our strong support of the work undertaken by the informal Council Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians: as a former member of the Security Council, Italy has always advocated the creation of such a forum. The group is indeed an important platform to discuss and monitor humanitarian developments and to devise effective strategies with the contribution of all relevant actors. I would like to stress here that prevention should be a pillar of any strategy aimed at protecting civilians. Indeed a timely preventive strategy can save more lives than any other action. Finally, we welcome the engagement of the General Assembly in the protection of civilians, as proven by the increasing references to the issue in GA resolutions. We encourage and support this important trend. Mr. President, I wish to conclude by highlighting two issues. First, as recognized also by Security Council resolution 1894, the protection of civilians is not only a military task: it is a more inclusive challenge. Every component of a peacekeeping mission – military, police, civil, gender, human rights, and child protection – must contribute to

achieving the “protection” goals. Whenever a peacekeeping operation is in place, civilians expect to be protected by UN forces. To ensure effective protection, peacekeepers must be adequately trained, which makes synergies with training centers a must. The cooperation agreement signed by DPKO and the Italian Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units last week is a significant step forward. We must continue to pursue such a capacity building approach. Lastly, the protection of civilians must also encompass the principle of the Responsibility to Protect. This principle implies that with sovereignty come special responsibilities. Governments must protect their own populations and the best way to guarantee such protection is to promote human rights, rule of law, and democratic governance. The responsibility to protect should be seen as an instrument available to the international community to overcome crises, provided that the conditions referred to in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the Summit Outcome Document are met. In this perspective, Italy looks forward to the upcoming informal interactive dialogue of the General Assembly on “Early warning, Assessment and the Responsibility to Protect” with a view to further implementing the concept.
