

Mr. Than Swe (Myanmar): At the outset, I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate. I also wish to extend my thanks to Under-Secretary- General John Holmes for his valuable and comprehensive briefing this morning.

Over the past several decades, we have witnessed a decline in the number of armed conflicts around the world. However, armed conflict, with all its complexity, continues to rage in some parts of the world. The grim reality we face today is that the protection of civilians in armed conflict remains a daunting challenge for the international community. The easy availability of illicit small arms and light weapons exacerbates the situation. Modern warfare and armaments, even with their deadly precision, result in collateral damage and massive destruction.

Myanmar believes that the most effective way to protect civilians in armed conflict is to address the root causes and put an effective end to it. In order to establish durable peace and stability, reconciliation between the parties to a conflict needs to be reinforced, along with the promotion of sustainable development, the eradication of poverty, good governance and the protection of human rights.

With that in mind, the Myanmar Government has embarked upon a national reconciliation process by engaging in peace negotiations with armed insurgent groups. As a result, 95 per cent of armed insurgents, numbering some 100,000, have returned to the legal fold. The former insurgents have also joined the national convention process, participated in the drafting of a new constitution, taken part in the national referendum and endorsed the new constitution. Peace and stability therefore prevail in almost all parts of Myanmar.

Myanmar also believes that the easy availability of illicit small arms and light weapons adds complexity to the nature of armed conflicts. It not only prolongs and deepens a conflict, but it also has severe implications for the social fabric. It breeds terrorism and transnational crime such as trafficking in human beings, drugs and illegal contraband. Myanmar therefore believes that a legally binding international instrument that prohibits the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons with non-State actors will go a long way to protect civilians in armed conflict.

Over the past nine years, the United Nations has made significant progress in strengthening its role in the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The four thematic resolutions of the Security Council on the protection of civilians form an effective comprehensive framework for action in that area. It must be stressed that the implementation of the resolutions should be implemented in faithful conformity with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and while upholding and respecting the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. National sovereignty and territorial integrity should also be respected, in order to foster a spirit of cooperation and confidence-building for the promotion of durable peace and stability.

My delegation is fully committed to a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. We are convinced that there is no military solution to it. We strongly call for the protection of civilians. In that connection, my delegation wishes to express its profound concern about

the destruction and loss of innocent life as a result of the ongoing military attacks in the Gaza. Myanmar joins the international community in urging the cessation of all military activities and violence in order to find a peaceful solution to the escalating conflict.

The United Nations and the international community have a legal and moral obligation to work for durable peace. The principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1860 (2009), and the relevant international humanitarian and human rights law must be upheld in a balanced, non-discriminatory and transparent manner if we genuinely wish to protect civilian populations from armed conflict and promote peace and stability.