

Statement of Nigeria: Ninth Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: 7 July 2010

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Nigeria.

We are very grateful to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his very insightful statement. I also commend Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes and High Commissioner for Human Rights Pillay for their very enriching briefings. We are grateful that, together, they have kept this subject at the forefront of our concerted efforts to bring peace and stability to the world.

Resolution 1894 (2009) laid out important principles related to adherence to international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law and to best practices for implementing civilian protection mandates. In their 2009 joint study on the protection of civilians in peacekeeping operations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations highlighted that the lack of clarity in the language of civilian protection mandates could affect the effectiveness of resources and training to meet civilian protection needs. It is imperative that this be addressed.

It is also important that we monitor very closely mandate implementation in the field. That is where the Secretary-General's reporting capability and the work of the Council's informal expert group on the protection of civilians can add the most value by reporting on the challenges in implementing the protection mandate alongside other mission objectives.

To address the gap in the link between the Security Council and activities in the field, it is essential that the Council always be fully briefed in advance of peacekeeping deliberations. We hope that the Secretariat will draw from lessons learned in the meetings with troop- and police-contributing countries in order to add to the quality of the briefings.

We should not forget that civilians may also be caught in the crossfire in circumstances where there is no peacekeeping force in place. In such situations, the Council must act swiftly and with purpose. The updated aide-memoire (see S/PRST/2009/1, annex) is an invaluable tool that sets out pathways for analyzing each situation and deploying the appropriate tools at the Council's disposal. For that, we are grateful and indebted to OCHA.

Nigeria reiterates the call on all parties to conflict to respect the laws of armed conflict. Those parties should manifest such respect by creating neutral zones or corridors for the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance, so that civilians may be safely evacuated or provided with assistance without threats to their well-being.

In just over three weeks, the Convention on Cluster Munitions will enter into force. That is an important instrument in terms of marking consensus against the use and stockpiling of munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians. It also stigmatizes those actors who do not adhere to its standards. It marks a further step on the road to minimizing so-called collateral damage in armed conflict. It is hoped that it will also enhance capacity to better serve those whom we have a responsibility to protect. By so doing, we might establish conditions for a just and peaceful world in which all can live in larger freedom.

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