

**Nordic Statement at Security Council Open Debate on
Protection of Civilians
Monday, June 25, 2012, New York
Ambassador Jarmo Viinanen
Permanent Representative of Finland to the United
Nations**

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country Finland.

We thank the Secretary-General for the sober assessment and concrete recommendations in his report, as well as all the briefers of today. We share the Secretary-General's grave concern for the unacceptable toll that conflicts around the world take on civilians and the continuing disregard for international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law by many parties to conflicts.

Mr. President,

The Nordic countries condemn the continuous atrocities in Syria in strongest possible terms. We are horrified by the continuous killings of civilians, the brutal executions of innocent children and the use of torture, including rape and sexual violence. The continuing constraints to humanitarian access, despite the commitment to the negotiated ceasefire, are unacceptable. We join the vast majority of the international community in urging the Government of Syria to immediately end the violence and all attacks on civilians and to fully cooperate with the Joint Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Kofi Annan, the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria and with the Commission of Inquiry mandated by the Human Rights Council. We strongly condemn the attacks against UN monitors and remind that the Syrian authorities are responsible for ensuring the security and safety of the mission.

We have taken serious note of the statement from the High Commissioner for Human Rights that the indiscriminate and possibly deliberate targeting and killing of civilians may amount to crimes against humanity and other forms of international crimes. There must be no impunity for those responsible for serious international crimes.

Mr. President,

The Nordic countries call on all parties to conflicts to comply with their international obligations and on national authorities to take all possible measures to provide accountability for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. Ensuring accountability is first and foremost a national responsibility. The capacity building of national justice and security institutions also serves the broader aim of strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights.

We congratulate the International Criminal Court and the Special Tribunal for Sierra Leone for having concluded landmark cases in the international fight against impunity: the judgement in the Lubanga case provides an important broadening of the definition on children who participate in hostilities, and the Taylor case was the first time that an international court has convicted a former head of state of responsibility for sexual violence. We now encourage the Council to enhance the consistency of its practice in referring situations to the ICC and consider adopting a checklist to guide its engagement with the ICC, including assisting the Court in situations of non-cooperation and in relation to the funding arrangements for the situations referred. We also support the recommendations for the increased use of Commissions of Inquiry.

Finally, Mr. President,

The Secretary-General focuses attention in his report on increased attacks on healthcare facilities and health professionals. In Syria, we have seen medical doctors and surgeons directly targeted, wounded and killed. Ambulances are attacked and hospitals damaged by explosive weapons. These threats and attacks against health care workers, facilities and vehicles are becoming more frequent in conflict situations and have devastating consequences for civilians. The direct effect on the security of health personnel has a multiplying effect on those who need their services the most – the victims of armed violence and conflict.

It is of utmost importance to improve the security and delivery of effective and impartial health in situations of armed conflict and other emergencies. The Nordic countries therefore fully support the recent “Health Care in Danger”-initiative launched by the ICRC at the 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. Stronger efforts are needed by States to create an environment conducive to health care in humanitarian crisis. All parties to conflict must respect and protect humanitarian relief personnel, medical personnel, hospitals and ambulances in all circumstances. States must step up their efforts to bring those responsible for attacks against health care to justice.

Thank you, Mr. President.



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