

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

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*):

At the outset, allow me to thank you, Madam President, for your initiative to revisit the issue of the protection of civilians in armed conflict. In that connection, we believe that there is a clear need to be guided by the 1949 Geneva Conventions in labelling a situation as an armed conflict. That will enable us to better focus our efforts and to avoid counterproductive political interference.

We would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Under-Secretary-General John Holmes and High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay for their statements. We highly appreciate Mr. Holmes' work in one of the most complex areas in which the United Nations operates.

The subject under consideration today has long been at the very centre of United Nations and Security Council attention. At the same time, in spite of the efforts of the international community, the world continues to be plagued by armed conflicts that claim the lives of thousands of persons. That is the sad reality of our times. The majority of the victims of conflict are civilians, most of them belonging to the most vulnerable groups, namely, women, children and older persons. In addition, we do not find it useful to split the categories of civilians needing international protection into additional sub-categories. In that connection, we propose that we be guided strictly by the relevant provisions of the Geneva Conventions.

We resolutely condemn both wilful attacks against civilians and civilian loss of life as a result of indiscriminate or disproportionate use of force, which constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law. Nor is there any justification for individual armed groups to seize hostages or carry out terrorist attacks against civilians.

We believe that improving the system for the collection and analysis of relevant data is necessary to effectively combat those phenomena. We request the Secretariat to be mindful of that in preparing future briefings to the Security Council on the issue of the protection of civilians.

It is clear that the protection of civilians is a priority task for all parties to a conflict. Peacekeepers, whose mandates increasingly include functions in that regard, have an important role to play in that connection. We therefore welcome the steps taken by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to train peacekeeping personnel.

We believe that, in the current circumstances, the efforts of the international community should be aimed first and foremost at strengthening national efforts in this area. In order to enhance effectiveness in that regard, there is a need to take into account the specific characteristics of each conflict and to take the necessary

decisions only on that basis, including with respect to the protection of civilians.

The United Nations should of course respond swiftly and effectively to instances of violence against civilians. What is important in that regard is that we work to prevent and to reduce conflicts and to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate former combatants. It is important that efforts in that regard be coordinated properly, with strict division of labour and responsibility in line with the Charter of the United Nations and other international legal instruments and under the leading role of the Security Council. We also believe that revisiting the issue of establishing new, separate Security Council mechanisms on the protection of civilians is not useful.

In conclusion, I would emphasize that only steadfast compliance by all parties with the norms of international humanitarian law and Security Council decisions, as well as the rejection of selective and unilateral approaches in interpreting violations, can promote improvements in conflict situations and strengthen genuine protection for civilians in armed conflicts.

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