



PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

350 EAST 35TH STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10016
<http://www.china-un.org>

PRESS RELEASE (translation)

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**Statement by the Chinese Delegation at the Security Council
Open Debate on "Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict"
22 June 2007**

Mr. President,

At the outset, I wish to express to USG Mr. John Holmes my thanks for his briefing and my appreciation for all his efforts and for the work he has done on the ground since taking office. I also wish to pay tribute to the relevant UN agencies for their efforts in protecting civilians in armed conflicts and in providing other humanitarian relief.

The issue of protection of civilians in armed conflict has been on the agenda of the Security Council for many years, during which numerous resolutions including Resolution 1674 (2006) and presidential statements were adopted. However, in almost every conflict situation, the circumstances of the civilians have not been much improved. Some conflicts have eluded solution for too long or have escalated and led to a continuous deterioration of the humanitarian situation, and consequently affected more civilians, and the refugees and displace persons have no access to essential relief. Therefore, while it is necessary for the Security Council to respond to a crisis with an integrated manner on the legal and political levels, it should also take tailored approach to deal with the particular situation of specific issues.

Firstly, the Security Council should faithfully carry out this sacred duty, as provided for by the Charter of the United Nations, by stepping up its efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts. Civilians are the most vulnerable group in armed conflicts and no remedial measure can save them from harms when caught in armed conflicts. Efforts to prevent or deal with crises will effectively contribute to the alleviation of the sufferings of civilians. Efforts to prevent and reduce conflicts are the best protection for civilians. Meanwhile,

together with other relevant bodies, the Security Council should identify and remove the root cause of conflicts so that both the symptoms and causes of the problem can be addressed.

Secondly, the role of the government should be given its place in the protection of civilians and should be respected. The Charter of the United Nations, the international humanitarian law, the resolutions of the Security Council and those of the General Assembly all require that governments bear the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians. The international community and external players have a role to play in resolving crises by providing help and support. But external assistance should be carried out with the prerequisite that the will of the government concerned be respected, its sovereignty and territorial integrity be preserved and that no arbitrary intervention be imposed on the government concerned over its objection.

Thirdly, the concept of “the responsibility to protect” should be understood and applied correctly. The outcome document of the World Summit of 2005 devoted a large section to a comprehensive elaboration on “the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”, and requested the GA to continue its exploration and enrichment of the concept. At present, there are still various understandings and interpretations about this concept by many member states. Therefore the Security Council should refrain from invoking the concept of “the responsibility to protect”. Still less should the concept be abused. The Security Council should respect and support the GA to continue to discuss about the concept, in order to reach broad consensus.

Fourthly, the effectiveness and credibility of humanitarian relief efforts should be improved. The parties concerned should collaborate in compliance with international humanitarian law. Humanitarian relief efforts are indispensable for minimizing loss and helping civilians overcome difficulty in the aftermath of a crisis. Over the years, humanitarian relief agencies have done a lot work in dangerous circumstances to provide relief to civilians in distress. They deserve our appreciation and acknowledgement. However, while the causes of conflicts are quite complicated and sensitive, the humanitarian relief efforts should strictly abide by the principle of fairness, neutrality, objectivity and independence, thereby safeguarding the humanitarian nature and credibility of the activities.

Finally, the Chinese delegation supports the release of a press statement by the president at the conclusion of the meeting.

Thank you, Mr. President.