



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

OPEN DEBATE OF THE  
SECURITY COUNCIL:  
PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT

STATEMENT

BY

MR. PATRICK RITTER,  
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,

The formal recognition, in the World Summit Outcome, of the responsibility of the international community to protect civilian populations when their governments fail to do so constitutes a major breakthrough in our common endeavor to prevent genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The main obligation for its implementation naturally falls on the Security Council. Diplomatic means such as targeted sanctions and embargoes, used in an effective way, should be employed at an early stage where violations against civilians prevail, to signal the concern of the international community and to serve as a first step to protect. Collective action to prevent and respond to genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes must not be made impossible by a non-concurring vote of one of the Permanent Members of the Council. This principle was first proposed by the High-Level Panel established in preparation of the World Summit of 2005 and has been taken up in the proposals on working methods of the Security Council, presented to the General Assembly last year, that were prepared by the "S-5"-group to which we belong. The rest of the UN membership also has a role to play in making the responsibility to protect operational, in that they can bring situations to the attention of the Security Council, in open debates and through other means such as consideration in the General Assembly. Furthermore, Article 8 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide allows any Contracting Party to call upon the competent organs of the United Nations to take appropriate action.

Mr. President,

The decision of the 2005 Summit is complementary to earlier resolutions of the General Assembly, such as GA resolution 46/182 which stresses the primary, while not exclusive responsibility of national authorities to protect their own population. The principle of responsibility to protect reaffirms this primary responsibility and complements it with the role of the international community when this responsibility is not met. That resolution also calls upon all States, whose populations are in need of humanitarian assistance, to facilitate safe access of humanitarian actors to such people. All too often, this fundamental principle is neglected. Humanitarian access to the vulnerable is a vital stepping stone to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Where national authorities are unable or unwilling to ensure that such access is granted and respected, the Security Council must step in to create and maintain the operational space needed by humanitarian actors to provide assistance. In many situations security is so precarious that humanitarian workers remain at considerable risk to violence. That is where the role of the Security Council in defining and facilitating the tasks and capacity of peacekeepers is crucial. At the same time, wider acceptance of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated

Personnel, which provides for substantial expansion of the scope of legal protection for such personnel, is urgently needed.

Mr. President,

International protection for civilians, whether by peacekeepers or humanitarian workers, can only be an interim response. Without political solutions, civilians continue to suffer and humanitarian workers are faced with open-ended displacement. Liechtenstein supports the idea of strengthening the mediation capacities of the Department of Political Affairs. The early use of the Secretary-General's good offices can be an important tool for a comprehensive and preventive approach to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and we consider mediation to be a core activity of the United Nations, in accordance with its purposes and principles. An unequivocal and firm stance of the Security Council that there will be no impunity for deliberate targeting of civilian populations would have a strong deterrent effect in any situation and thus also serve as a very useful tool of prevention. Prevention is indeed a key aspect in the protection of civilians. Preventive action can, however, only be effective if it is made clear that abuses against civilian populations, often carried out against their most vulnerable members, in particular women and children, are violations of international law that will not go unpunished. In this context, Liechtenstein wholeheartedly welcomes the first convictions for the recruitment and use of child soldiers rendered by the Special Court for Sierra Leone. This constitutes another significant step in the area of international criminal justice which has expanded very rapidly and is one of the most important developments in international relations over the past two decades. This historic judgment also strengthens the role of the Security Council in its fight against impunity. We believe that the International Criminal Court must play the central role in the efforts of the international community to end impunity and hope that the Security Council will give its full support to the ICC in this respect.

I thank you.