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**STATEMENT
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**ON THE
PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED
CONFLICT**

**SECURITY COUNCIL
UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK**

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Mr President,

We thank you for convening this open debate on the "Protection of civilians in armed conflict", and we also commend the Secretary-General for comprehensive report presented.

Mr President,

It is encouraging to note that the number of armed conflicts has decreased from 50 in 1992 to 30 in 2004. We need to acknowledge, however, that the tragic impact of issues such as indiscriminate killings, mutilation, sexual violence, forced displacement and loss of livelihoods require our urgent attention and highlight the importance of addressing the issue of the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

The international community needs to continue to be engaged as a collective to address the issue of the protection of the civilians in armed conflict and to ensure the necessary political support and other resources. We welcome the call made by the Secretary-General for a more predictable humanitarian response to complex emergencies, through the proposed upgraded Central Emergency Response Fund. We believe that such reforms could enhance response capacity, develop more predictable humanitarian financing and strengthen humanitarian co-ordination. .

The critical role that the United Nations could and should play, remains vital. General Assembly resolution 46/182, amongst others, highlights the important agreed principles that guide the manner in which humanitarian assistance should be provided, in particular the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. These principles were again endorsed by the 2005 World Summit.

Mr President,

We wish to make the following remarks on some of the issues covered in the report of the Secretary-General.

The report highlights the problems created by the continued recruitment of child soldiers. It also puts an important emphasis on protection from physical and sexual violence, especially where it affects women and children . In this regard, we support the call on all parties to strictly comply with the relevant rules and principles of international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law. We also agree with the appeal to end impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and other egregious crimes perpetrated against civilians.

The report of the Secretary-General has also correctly recognised that a secure environment for the protection of civilians, following from a period of armed conflict, requires the strengthening of national legal, law enforcement and judicial systems. We wish to stress that, in addition, it also requires that disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes should be fully funded. We therefore welcome the call made

by the Secretary-General to reinforce the inclusion of adequate reintegration measures in peacekeeping and peace-building missions.

The international community agreed during the 2005 World Summit that each individual State has the responsibility for the protection of its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. It was also agreed that, where appropriate, Member States would be helped to build the necessary capacity to enable them to fulfil their protection mandate. It is from this perspective that we welcome the report by the Secretary-General and this open debate in the Security Council. We wish to emphasise, however, that the 2005 World Summit also called for continued consideration of the issue of the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity within the United Nations General Assembly.

Mr President,

As in previous reports, the Secretary-General again highlights the valuable role that regional and other inter-governmental institutions can play in the protection of civilians, a role that South Africa supports. We therefore agree with the appeal made by the Secretary-General to enhance the capacity and readiness of regional organisations to respond to protection needs of civilians. However, we would like to emphasise that the stronger involvement in the protection of civilians and humanitarian assistance of regional organisations such as the African Union should not lead to an abdication by the United Nations system of its responsibilities. What is important is closer cooperation and partnership between the United Nations system and regional organisations.

Lastly, the observation made by the Secretary-General in his report that peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and humanitarian response to complex emergencies are mutually reinforcing is an important one. Closer co-operation between humanitarian and peacekeeping efforts is supported, while we also recognise the need to respect the various mandates of the different institutions. A particular example of how closer co-operation could assist in the protection of civilians is where properly mandated peacekeeping missions could create a secure and safe environment for humanitarian organisations to have full and safe access to the affected population.

Mr President,

Recognising that the emergence of new challenges demands that the international community should actively and collectively address these issues, it is the hope of my delegation that it would continue to be done in a way that would increase respect for the principles of international humanitarian law, human dignity and the legitimacy of the United Nations.

I thank you, Mr President.