

## **Italy**

### **Security Council Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 7 July 2010**

[Permanent Representative to the United Nations,] Mr. (Cesare Maria) Ragolini (Italy): Madam President, I wish to thank you for convening this debate. I also would like to express my deep appreciation to Under-Secretary-General John Holmes for his briefing, which gives us an overarching picture of the challenges we face in the protection of civilians in armed conflict. I seize this opportunity to commend his tireless commitment in defending the lives of civilian victims of conflicts worldwide and wish him all the best in his future endeavours. I also wish to thank High Commissioner for Human Rights Pillay for her contributions.

Italy fully associates itself with the statement which will be delivered by the head of the European Union delegation on behalf of the European Union, and we also wish to make some further remarks.

I will start by focusing on some of the main concerns in the field of the protection of civilians.

A number of persistent violators of human rights and humanitarian law still go unpunished. Accountability is therefore a central issue. The Council must be ready to take action against those who continuously undermine the credibility of its commitment. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has an important role to play as well. In this respect, Italy welcomes the outcome of the recent Review Conference in Kampala that further strengthened the ICC's role.

We also share the concern about the lack of progress in finding durable solutions to the situation of internally displaced persons. A more comprehensive approach is needed that looks at both the most urgent and the long-term problems, such as land and property issues, which are key in addressing the causes of conflict.

As far as positive developments are concerned, the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict was certainly a crucial step in addressing what is one of the most serious threats to the protection of civilians. We strongly support the mandate of Ms. Wallström, and we look forward to assisting her in this challenging task.

We also welcome the recent briefing of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The protection of civilians, particularly those belonging to the most vulnerable categories, must be an integral part of the work of the Committee. We hope that such briefings will gradually become a standard practice.

Moreover, let me express our strong support for the work undertaken by the informal expert group on the protection of civilians. As a former member of the Security Council, Italy has always advocated the creation of such a forum. The group is indeed an important platform for discussing and monitoring humanitarian developments and for devising effective strategies, with the contribution of all relevant actors. I would like to stress here that prevention should be a pillar of any strategy aimed at protecting civilians. Indeed, a timely preventive strategy can save more lives than any other action.

Finally, we welcome the engagement of the General Assembly in the protection of civilians, as proven by the increasing references to the issue in its resolutions. We encourage and support this important trend.

I wish to conclude by highlighting two issues. First, as also by in resolution 1894 (2009), the protection of civilians is not only a military task; it is a more inclusive challenge. Every component of a peacekeeping mission — military, police, civilian, gender, human rights and child protection — must contribute to achieving the protection goals. Whenever a peacekeeping operation is in place, civilians expect to be protected by United Nations forces. To ensure effective protection, peacekeepers must be adequately trained, which makes synergies with training centres a must. The cooperation agreement signed by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Italian Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units last week is a significant step forward. We must continue to pursue such a capacity-building approach.

Lastly, the protection of civilians must also encompass the principle of the responsibility to protect. This principle implies that with sovereignty come special responsibilities. Governments must protect their own populations, and the best way to guarantee such protection is to promote human rights, the rule of law and democratic governance. The responsibility to protect should be seen as an instrument available to the international community to overcome crises, provided that the conditions referred to in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the Summit Outcome Document (General Assembly resolution 60/1) are met. In this perspective, Italy looks forward to the upcoming informal interactive dialogue of the General Assembly on early warning, assessment and the responsibility to protect with a view to further implementing the concept.