

Statement
by Ambassador Darja Bavdaž Kuret,
Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the United Nations
at
the Security Council Open Debate on
"Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts"

May 23, 2019

Mr. President,

I wish to thank the Indonesian presidency of the Council for this open debate, Secretary- General for his annual report and his briefing and the briefers for their presentations.

Slovenia aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I wish to add some remarks in national capacity.

Mr. President,

This year we mark 20 years since the adoption of the Security Council resolution 1265 and 70 years of the adoption of the Geneva Conventions. And yet 70 years after that - civilians are continuing to account for the vast majority of casualties. Even worse, the scale and severity of human suffering in armed conflicts worldwide continues to grow at an alarming pace. Today many parties to conflicts are showing a blatant disregard for the principles in the conduct of hostilities. Quite the opposite - they are deliberately targeting civilians.

The most affected are the most vulnerable groups – women, children, refugees, IDPs and people with disabilities. New means and ways of armed conflict such as proliferation and fragmentation of non-state actors, increasingly urban warfare and the indiscriminate use explosives are putting even more civilians at risks of being killed, injured, and displaced.

Mr. President,

Peacekeeping operations play central role in protecting civilians and it is essential that the Council provides all peacekeeping missions with mandates, where special emphasis is given to the protection of the most vulnerable.

Slovenia has a history of assisting victims of armed conflict and it remains committed to alleviate the pain of children affected by armed conflict, including by providing psychological and physical assistance and rehabilitation. In recent years well over 500 children have been rehabilitated in Slovenia.

Social rehabilitation training for pre-school and school counsellors and Mine Risk Education program are just two examples that have shown to be of great importance for strengthening the overall well-being and development of children affected by conflicts.

Slovenia also continuously advocates for respect of treaty obligations and customary international law protecting civilians.

We fully support the use preventive diplomacy and we call for prevention and better response to large-scale violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. We repeat our call on the Security Council to strongly, systematically, consistently and promptly respond to all violations of international humanitarian law, including by using restrictive measures against state and non-state actors in breach of international humanitarian law.

Ensuring accountability and fighting against impunity which are key elements in the protection of civilians, continue to remain a major challenge. In this regard, the role of international criminal justice has been recognized, in particular the International Criminal Court. States must comply with their obligations under international law, to hold accountable perpetrators of crime committed against civilians.

Mr President,

Women have a very important role in the protection of civilians and their involvement is crucial for finding best solutions to lessen the burden of civilians in conflict situations.

Exactly a month ago we have called on all parts of the United nations and especially the Security Council to continue prioritizing this issue and further called on the Security Council to strongly, systematically, consistently and promptly respond to all violations in situations of armed conflicts. Today we ask again to do its utmost to prevent, investigate and when necessary take appropriate actions to ensure accountability.

Mr. President,

Safeguarding humanitarian access and respect for humanitarian principles needs to remain at the core of our endeavours to protect civilians and to provide assistance to them in the situations of armed conflicts. The impunity for international humanitarian law violations can no longer be tolerated.

Let me conclude by stressing that effective peacebuilding and peacekeeping must involve the entire UN, mandates must be robust, but still flexible enough, so that the protection of and assistance to civilian population is in the heart of it. This demands a strong and continuous engagement of the Council.

Thank you.