

Statement by Ambassador Asoke Kumar Mukerji
Permanent Representative, in the Security Council Open Debate on
“Protection of Civilians in armed conflict” on August 19, 2013

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Madam President,

Let me begin by thanking you and your delegation for organizing today’s debate on the important issue of Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict. We thank all the distinguished briefers for this debate today for their valuable inputs.

2. It bears recalling that the Security Council has been considering protection of civilians as a thematic subject since 1999. This has also become a key focus in many resolutions, including those that are country-specific and relate to UN peacekeeping missions. However, the sad fact remains that civilians continue to suffer disproportionately during armed conflicts.

3. We, therefore, hope, Madam President, that today’s debate and the comprehensive concept note prepared by your delegation will contribute to the evolving discourse on strengthening protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Madam President,

4. India has consistently supported full compliance with applicable international humanitarian laws by all parties to an armed conflict.

5. We believe that a critical requirement in this context relates to the capacities of national institutions in situations of armed conflict and the need to strengthen these. Obviously, capacity building of key national institutions, including in security and justice sectors, requires to be adequately resourced.

6. It is important that the international community, including the UN, step up to the plate and partner with national authorities to build and strengthen the capacity of State organs.

7. Today, as we mark the World Humanitarian Day, we must emphasize that inadequate resourcing is also an imperative for UN peacekeeping missions that are now also being charged with mandates of protection of civilians. We must hold accountable those who target UN peacekeepers who themselves are responsible for protecting civilians in their theatre of operation.

8. Moreover, efforts at peace building should be initiated right at the beginning and the cause of the armed conflict addressed through national reconciliation and inclusive political processes giving all sections of society a stake in peaceful co-existence.

Madam President,

9. The need to ensure humanitarian access for populations affected by armed conflict cannot be overstated and States must endeavor to facilitate the same.

10. However, humanitarian actors must also ensure that their activities do not provide legitimacy or operational space for terrorist or armed groups.

11. Terrorists and illegal armed groups that often bear the primary responsibility for such attacks against civilians should be held accountable for such attacks.

Madam President,

12. Security Council action must be based on full respect for the UN Charter, including sovereignty and integrity of the Member States.

13. In so far as issues of impunity are concerned, we believe that a lasting solution is not in the creation of more international or regional institutions, but in building national institutions through capacity building efforts so that they can function consistent with the rule of law.

14. In conclusion, Madam President, I would like to reiterate our consistent view that protection of civilians is primarily a national responsibility that becomes even more important in an armed conflict. It is

our belief that contribution to national capacity building rather than intervention mechanisms should be the priority of the Security Council.

I thank you.

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