

**Statement by Ambassador Asoke Kumar Mukerji, Permanent
Representative, in the Security Council Open Debate on Protection of
Civilians: Protection of Journalists in Conflict Situations on July 17, 2013**

Madam President,

I would like to thank you for organizing this debate on Protection of Journalists in Conflict Situations under the theme of Protection of Civilians. I would also like to thank you for the concept paper on the subject. We have benefitted greatly from the briefings today by the distinguished Deputy Secretary General and other briefers.

Madam President,

Before making our observations on this subject, we would reiterate India's consistent view that protection of journalists in all situations is the foremost responsibility of every state.

In India, Articles 19 and 21 of the Constitution guarantee the right to life, personal liberty, freedom of speech and expression. Such constitutional rights are of fundamental importance in any democratic society. Journalists play a crucial role in ensuring that citizens exercise these rights in reality. As the world's most populous democracy, India is committed to the protection of these rights for all its citizens, including journalists.

Our ingrained awareness of these rights is an integral part of our participation in the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations, where India has been the largest contributor. Indian UN peacekeepers have helped restore peace and security in conflict situations around the globe and thereby facilitated the creation of a conducive environment for the exercise of the right to freedom of speech and expression.

Madam President,

Since 1950, India has adhered to and fully supported the Geneva Conventions. We also recall this Council's demand in Resolution 1738 that all parties to an armed conflict comply fully with the obligations applicable to them under international law related to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, including journalists, media professionals and associated personnel.

Such compliance is necessary not only for access to information, but also for resolution of conflict situations and for post-conflict peacebuilding.

Madam President,

While discussing best practices for protecting journalists in conflict situations, we would recommend certain basic precautions. These recommendations are meant to put in context issues of access and security in conflict situations. First and foremost, journalists should function within the relevant domestic laws of the countries concerned, so that they have full recourse to the protection afforded by such laws to them. Second, their access to conflict zones should be in a legal manner. Third, they should maintain strict neutrality and impartiality and not become a party to the conflict. By following such precautions, it will become easier for States to protect journalists, facilitate their professional work, and ensure that journalists become a catalyst for conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

On their part, national governments must come together and pledge to provide protection to journalists in conflict situations, especially where their whereabouts and coordinates have been provided in advance.

Madam President,

We have witnessed the tremendous dynamism and professionalism of journalists in reporting from conflict situations. Many journalists, including women, have performed their professional duty at grave personal risk.

The protection that these journalists have received from responsive mechanisms, established by states under the rule of law, demonstrates the need to support the further development of such mechanisms. The efforts of the Council and of the international community require to be directed at assisting national authorities in augmenting such mechanisms, and in generating greater awareness of these issues. This is the most sustainable method for sovereign governments to discharge their responsibility to protect journalists in conflict situations.

Thank you.

BACK TO SECURITY COUNCIL