



PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT

by

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to the United Nations**

**Open debate of the Security Council
on
Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts**

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Mr. President,

At the outset I would like to thank the Polish Presidency for organizing this debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the UN Secretary-General for his briefing and recent report covering the global state of the protection of civilians. Further I would like to thank Director-General of the International Committee of the Red Cross and commend the remarkable work of the ICRC, and, last but not least, let me thank Ms. Hanaa Edwar for her tireless efforts and relentless work, often directly in the conflict zones.

While fully aligning myself with the statement of the European Union, I would like to offer a few additional reflections.

Mr. President,

Today's open debate on this topic is not only of utmost importance, but unfortunately, is very timely as well. Every day we bear witness to an unprecedented downfall of value of civilian life and human dignity. Attacks on civilians as well as on civilian infrastructure, whether targeted or accidental, seem to be common part of warfare. Inability or unwillingness of States to protect their own civilians is a major failure of their primary responsibility. This happens even though we have made considerable progress in the legislative framework, but its implementation somehow falters. Therefore, we need to do more, to achieve tangible progress on the ground and I will mention 3 particular areas of focus.

First, we, the Member States, must reaffirm our commitment to the values and principles of International Law, including International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law. We have to respect and uphold it, and we have to claim and ensure our key role to protect our civilians. It comes without saying that violators of these norms are to be held accountable, by national authorities that have the primary responsibility for their prosecution, or then within international justice framework. Achieving universal jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court would be the first step.

Second, the role of the Security Sector in the Protection of Civilians is substantial, and Slovakia is a longstanding supporter of Security Sector Reform and Governance. Failure of Security Sector often results in security threats and violations against civilians as well as human rights abuses against them. Security Sector institutions, if well developed and representative of diversity of population, can address specific needs of various groups of population, and so play a crucial role in prevention as well.

And third, there is an urgent need for unconditional protection of safety and security of humanitarian aid, whether its personnel or infrastructure. According to WHO, 322 attacks targeted health care in conflict areas in 2017, with majority of those being targeted intentionally. Fatal impacts of these attacks are multiplied by the use of explosive and chemical weapons, often in densely populated areas. Implementation of the framework set in resolution 2286 and relevant Secretary-General's recommendations is imperative in this regard.

Mr. President,

Next year we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of Security Council's engagement on the protection of civilians and its first landmark resolution 1265. It will be a good opportunity to look back and reflect on the positive developments that have been made, but also to redouble our efforts in full and universal implementation of recommendations put forward in numerous Secretary-General's reports. We cannot so-to-say gamble with the principles of humanity and our action when protecting civilians must be decisive and resolute both on national and international level.

Thank you for your attention.