

Statement of Ambassador Juan Ramon de la Fuente, Permanent Representative of Mexico, at the Security Council's open debate regarding the protection of civilians in armed conflicts

New York, 23 May 2019.

Mister President,

We thank Indonesia for convening this debate on a fundamental topic of the Security Council, and to the Secretary General for his report.

Twenty years since the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1265 (1999), there has been important progress regarding the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. It is clear to us, however, that these advancements have been insufficient, and the situation merits a rigorous assessment.

Mister President,

Unfortunately, civilians continue to be the main targets and victims of indiscriminate attacks, which clearly run counter to international and humanitarian law.

In the face of mounting numbers of injured and killed civilians, it is only natural that figures also increase for refugees and asylum seekers resulting from armed conflicts.

Moreover, access restrictions against humanitarian assistance continue to be frequent. This is inadmissible. All parties involved in conflicts should adopt measures to guarantee the uninterrupted, safe and timely access to personnel providing humanitarian aid. Humanitarian assistance cannot be held hostage due to political considerations.

We condemn any attack against medical and humanitarian personnel. These attacks constitute war crimes. For this reason, we have joined, along with over 30 other countries, the political declaration advanced by France, regarding the protection of medical and humanitarian personnel in armed conflicts.

We are likewise concerned that progress on accountability in this respect, as stipulated by international criminal law, has been scarce and fall short. Reports of heinous crimes cannot go without investigation and being addressed. In this sense, the work of the International Criminal Court is fundamental to combat impunity. However, the Court needs the support and cooperation by States to fulfill its mandate.

The impact of conflicts on the availability of food is likewise a reason to alarm us. The practice of letting civilians go hungry as a method of war persists. The bearing of armed conflicts on the environment and cultural heritage is also large. Finally, we cannot but mention that people with disabilities continue to be disproportionately affected by armed conflicts. We agree with the Secretary General that it is necessary

to pay close attention to this vulnerable group, as we simultaneously support the A4P initiative to protect civilians in the context of peacekeeping operations.

Mister President,

We must pay urgent attention to the problem regarding the flow of arms towards conflict zones. As a Party to the Arms Trade Treaty, Mexico reaffirms the common obligation to only conduct responsible arms transfers. We must stop the exports of arms to places where they are used to commit human rights violations and against international humanitarian law. We call upon weapons exporters, and those who import them, to consolidate this norm and to join as Parties to this Treaty.

I also underscore that Latin American and Caribbean countries have recognized the urgent need to avoid the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. During the Regional Conference on this topic, celebrated in Santiago of Chile last December, we adopted a clear political position in this respect.

Mister President,

The Security Council plays a fundamental role in the protection of civilians in armed conflicts around the globe. However, the Security Council has been repeatedly paralyzed due to the use of the veto, thus preventing it from acting during crises that include atrocious crimes, such as genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

It is thus inadmissible that a procedural tool prevents the Council from fulfilling its obligations, especially when the lives of people, and sometimes of entire populations, are at stake. In the spirit of the demands of present times, better accountability is necessary. The responsibility that is attached to the veto must be fully assumed and the costs brought about by the Council's paralysis.

We will continue to insist on the necessity that all Member States of the United Nations, and in particular the Permanent Members of the Council, join the French-Mexican initiative on the restriction of the use of the veto regarding mass atrocities. Over a hundred States already support this initiative. We trust that many more will join soon.

Thank you, Mr. President.