

**Security Council**

Distr.: General
14 May 2019

Original: English

**Letter dated 8 May 2019 from the Permanent Representative of
Indonesia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to inform you that, under the presidency of Indonesia, the Security Council will hold a ministerial-level open debate on Thursday, 23 May 2019, on the theme “Protection of civilians in armed conflict”. The meeting will be chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Retno L.P. Marsudi.

In order to guide the discussion on the subject, Indonesia has prepared a concept note (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dian Triansyah Djani
Ambassador



Annex to the letter dated 8 May 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council open debate on the theme “Protection of civilians in armed conflict”, to be held on 23 May 2019

Introduction

1. The Republic of Indonesia will convene a ministerial-level open debate on the theme “Protection of civilians in armed conflict” on 23 May 2019. The open debate will consider the Secretary-General’s forthcoming report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, which will be issued in advance of the open debate. The open debate will also be held in the context of the seventieth anniversary of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the twentieth anniversary of the Security Council seizing the matter of the protection of civilians in armed conflict as an item on its agenda by holding its first open debate, issuing a statement by the President of the Council (S/PRST/1999/6) and adopting its resolution 1265 (1999).

2. Promoting the protection of civilians in armed conflict and ensuring the implementation of international humanitarian law are the central challenges today and should be the key priorities of Member States for the years ahead. As the protection of civilians agenda has always been a focus of the Security Council for the past 20 years, in 2019 the Republic of Indonesia intends to use this valuable opportunity to specifically mark its twentieth anniversary, including by inviting Member States to share their good stories, lessons learned and experiences related to implementing the protection of civilians agenda and international humanitarian law. It is expected that, through this positive and constructive discourse, the Security Council can re-emphasize the importance of that agenda. Member States will also be invited to share their experiences, views and recommendations on challenges faced in promoting the implementation of the protection of civilians agenda and international humanitarian law.

3. In order to address the wide range of themes under the protection of civilians agenda, the open debate will pay particular attention to the good examples and experiences of Member States in implementing the protection of civilians agenda related to: (a) the involvement of local and affected communities in the design and implementation of a range of tailored, context-specific and effective protection of civilians measures; (b) the protection of civilians mandates in peacekeeping operations; and (c) the mechanisms established by Member States to prevent the escalation of armed conflict within their territories.

Background

4. In the 20 years since the first Security Council open debate was held on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, both the Council and individual Member States have taken considerable steps to strengthen the protection of civilians. The Council has taken steps in thematic and country-specific resolutions and in statements by the President of the Council, as set out in the seventh edition of the Aide Memoire for the consideration of issues pertaining to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, which was recently issued as an annex to a statement by the President of the Council (S/PRST/2018/18). In addition, Member States have taken a range of individual, regional and international initiatives to enhance respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians.

5. It is important to increase the involvement of civilians in the design and implementation of protection of civilians measures. This can be done through appropriate mechanisms that engage local communities, including in the eight United Nations peacekeeping operations with mandates to protect civilians. These measures have been put in place in order to better understand local community perceptions of threats and to build the confidence of local populations in ongoing activities and processes.

6. It is also imperative to engage with and involve local and affected communities in the design and implementation of protection of civilians measures and mandates. This approach is not considered a substitute for the protection responsibilities of national authorities and parties to armed conflict or an alternative to the physical protection that a peacekeeping mission can bring. Rather, the concerns and priorities of communities are considered from the perspective of enhancing their protection, both on their behalf and with their involvement. It is a participatory process that acknowledges communities as specialists of their own situations within the context of their national authorities. In the event of conflict, local communities are among the first to be affected. They are best placed to identify the threats they are facing and to know how best to respond to them within the local context of conflicts. Therefore, engaging, raising awareness and involving local and affected communities will vastly improve the effectiveness of protection of civilians measures and mandates. This, in turn, will increase the national capacity to prevent a further escalation of conflict.

Objectives

7. Given that this open debate marks the twentieth anniversary of the item entitled “Protection of civilians in armed conflict” on the agenda of the Security Council, interventions may focus on the relevant experiences of Member States, including: (a) steps that have been taken to advance the protection of civilians; (b) challenges faced by Member States in the implementation of the protection of civilians agenda; and (c) the proposed recommendations or commitments of Member States to advance the agenda in the future.

Guiding questions

8. The following questions can be considered by Member States in preparation for the open debate:

(a) What are good experiences and examples that can be shared by Member States with regard to promoting the implementation of the protection of civilians agenda?

(i) What examples or best practices can be shared regarding the implementation of the protection of civilians agenda at the national level?

(ii) What practical steps can be taken to promote and strengthen the implementation of the protection of civilians agenda?

(iii) What are the challenges faced in efforts to promote the implementation of the protection of civilians agenda?

(iv) What steps should the Security Council, Member States, the United Nations, regional organizations or other actors take to support Member States in addressing these challenges? How can the Security Council strengthen its promotion of the protection of civilians in armed conflict in the context of the items currently on its agenda?

(b) What can Security Council members do to ensure that there is sufficient coordination across the Council's main working groups and subsidiary bodies on protection-related issues?

(c) What are good practices and examples that can be shared to promote and strengthen the involvement of local communities in the design and implementation of protection of civilians measures and mandates?

(d) What measures can parties to conflict, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations adopt to support the promotion and strengthening of the protection of civilians agenda and to support engagement with local communities in the design and implementation of measures for their own protection?

(e) What are the views of Member States regarding the implementation of protection of civilians mandates by United Nations peacekeeping operations?

Briefers

9. The briefers will be the following:

- Secretary-General of the United Nations
- President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer
- Executive Director at Center for Civilians in Conflict, Federico Borello

Format and participants

10. Upon adoption of the agenda, the President of the Security Council will chair the open debate, to be held on 23 May 2019 in the Security Council Chamber at 10 a.m. The President will first give the floor to the Secretary-General, followed by the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross and then the Executive Director of the Center for Civilians in Conflict. Following the statements of the briefers, the President of the Council will give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements, followed by Member States and observers who are not Council members.
