

## CONCEPT NOTE

### **The Future of Civilian Protection in Peace Operations** ***Endorsing and Implementing the Kigali Principles***

**May 11<sup>th</sup> 2016, UNHQ NY**

#### **Context**

Protection of Civilians (PoC) in armed conflict is at the core of the work of the UN. It is a key responsibility for members of the international community. Since the genocides in Rwanda and Srebrenica, the United Nations has taken steps to ensure that peacekeeping is made more effective. Still, challenges in a range of conflict situations remain enormous. Peacekeepers are increasingly called upon to uphold the international community's responsibility to protect civilians from mass atrocities. The tremendous suffering by civilians in armed conflict can be seen on a daily basis on your newsfeed; it is reflected in the morbid statistics of civilian deaths in conflict situations around the globe.

In his latest report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict issued in June 2015, the Secretary-General draws the attention of the Security Council to the deliberate targeting and indiscriminate attacks on civilians that have become a recurrent feature in many conflicts, resulting in increased levels of civilian casualties, displacement, and human suffering. The report highlights the challenges faced by humanitarian organizations to meet basic needs, including access restrictions and direct attacks against humanitarian personnel, supplies and facilities. The Secretary-General noted that prevailing disrespect for international humanitarian law by some States and non-State armed groups, and pervasive impunity for violations, have become "one of the most critical challenges for the protection of civilians."

In an unprecedented joint appeal on 31 October 2015, the Secretary-General and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) condemned the growing lack of respect for international humanitarian law and the decline in protection of civilians in many conflicts. Together the Secretary-General and ICRC President urged States to make every effort, individually and collectively, to achieve political solutions to conflicts, exert their influence to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law, hold perpetrators of violations accountable, grant unhindered access to and protect humanitarian and medical personnel and facilities, and respond to the needs of internally-displaced persons and refugees.

On May 28-29, 2015, Rwanda organized a High-level International Conference on the Protection of Civilians in Kigali in the run-up to the Leaders' Summit on UN Peacekeeping. During that conference, Rwanda presented the Kigali Principles on PoC. A year later several countries have endorsed the principles. More are to follow. The Kigali Principles set out critical benchmarks for Member States to guide collective efforts in improving the capacity of peace operations to protect civilians. This event welcomes those that are ready to join the signatories of the Kigali Principles to do so in a public ceremony.

The High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) report launched in June 2015 also contains valuable recommendations to the UN and its Member States regarding PoC. A closer look at how these recommendations are being implemented is timely. This event will address the state of play of the main recommendations and the Secretary-General's reaction to it.

There is also a need to pay special attention to the negative impact of misconduct by peacekeepers. The Report of an Independent Review of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by International Peacekeeping Forces in the Central African Republic of December 17<sup>th</sup> 2015 illustrates the vulnerability of the actions by a few individuals that have a huge negative impact on the reliability of UN peacekeepers as a whole and additionally inflicts a huge reputational damage to the UN. The UN Security Council has taken steps to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers by adopting resolution 2272 on 11 March 2016.

The High-Level Event of the UNGA on "The strengthening of the UN in international peace and security" forms the context in which this event takes place. High level participation from Member States, the UN as well as relevant think tanks and NGO's will ensure an event that will take the commitment to PoC one step further towards implementation. On the basis of questions from the moderator, panelists will make practical recommendations to Troop Contributing Countries (TPP), the UN and other actors on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

### **Objectives/desired outcomes**

- More UN Member States join the current signatories of the Kigali Principles in endorsing these principles.
- The interactive discussion is an opportunity for Troop and Police Contributing Countries (TCC/PCCs) and other Member States to reflect on the Kigali Principles and consider how their implementation can best contribute to future efforts to uphold civilian protection mandates. It is also an opportunity to better understand the current and emerging challenges TCC/PCCs face with regard to protecting civilians. Member States are encouraged to base their interventions on the following questions relating to civilian protection and linked to the spirit of the Kigali Principles:
  - *The decision to 'open the gates' to civilians fleeing violence in South Sudan saved thousands of lives. However, UNMISS faces considerable challenges and pressures in providing ongoing security to civilians still taking refuge inside the POC sites. What can be done to provide security in POC sites and address internal and external security issues?*
  - *Sometimes peacekeepers have decided not to intervene to protect civilians who are under attack just outside their bases or they have retreated from areas rather than confronting approaching armed groups. This can be caused by a lack of clarity regarding the rules of engagement. How can TCC/PCCs achieve better clarity on the use of force to protect civilians (e.g. through better guidance or training)?*
  - *How can the UN strengthen its monitoring and evaluations of troops and police in the field and prevent such protective failures?*
  - *While civilians still bear the brunt of armed conflict there has been an alarming increase in deliberate attacks against peacekeepers. What can be done to enhance safety and security for uniformed personnel?*
  - *Following the pledges made at the September Peacekeeping Summit, what resource and capabilities gaps still exist specifically as it relates to protection of civilians? How successful has phased mandating been in narrowing the gap between expectations and capacities?*

Using the Kigali Principles as a foundation, concrete recommendations will be drafted on how Member States and the UN can improve their roles in protecting civilians.

### **Programme**

The event will take place from 3:00PM to 5:00PM on 11 May in Conference Room 1 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Minister of State in Charge of Cooperation of the Republic of Rwanda will provide opening remarks. Dr. Simon Adams, Executive Director of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, who will serve as moderator for the dialogue, will then invite the distinguished panelists to provide opening remarks before opening the floor to delegates and other participants. Delegations are encouraged to engage in an open and interactive discussion. At the end of the interactive discussion segment there will be a ceremony for all signatories of the Kigali Principles; representatives of all missions that have endorsed the principles will be called forward for a photo opportunity. The co-Chairs will close the event with concluding remarks.

## **Speakers**

### Co-Chairs:

- H.E. Mr. Bert Koenders, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands
- H.E. Mr. Eugène-Richard Gasana, Minister of State in Charge of Cooperation/Permanent Representative of Rwanda

### Opening Remarks:

- H.E. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the General Assembly (PGA)

### Speakers:

- H.E. Ms. Samantha Power, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations
- Mr. Ian Martin, Executive Director, Security Council Report
- Lt. General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, former Force Commander of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO)

Moderated by Dr. Simon Adams, Executive Director, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect

## **Venue**

Conference Room 1 at UN Headquarters.

## **Schedule**

15.00-15.15 - Opening by co-chairs, followed by opening remarks from the PGA

15.15-16.00 - Discussion by speakers on the basis of questions from the moderator

16.00-16.45 - Q&A session with interventions from the public

16.45-16.55 - Ceremony with all signatories of the Kigali Principles, including photo opportunity

16.55-17.00 - Closing by co-chairs