

Statement of the Netherlands in POC side event, May 11th 2016

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored to be here today to co-chair, together with Minister Gasana of Rwanda, this important discussion on the present and future of civilian protection in peace operations. We are a new movement, establishing our credentials today

Last year's UN peace and security reviews on Peacekeeping, UNSCR 1325 and Peacebuilding call for a people-centered approach. They call for action, leadership and reforms. Protection of civilians is an essential part of this 'package deal'.

"So what are you going to do about it?", Major General Patrick Cammaert would say. A simple question he uses in scenario based training for peacekeepers all over the world. A question that does not allow any room for jargon; it calls on the responsibility to act. It calls on all of us to answer those who have put their hopes in the UN, its blue flag and helmets.

Each individual state has the prime responsibility to protect its citizens. But what do we do if men and women cannot lead their lives save from threats? The appeal by the Secretary-General and the President of the ICRC, in October 2015 is loud and clear: Act effectively, decisively and in a timely manner to protect civilians in conflict. In this respect, I welcome the important resolution

adopted last week on the protection of health care workers in armed conflict. The Netherlands was among the more than 80 co-sponsors of this important text. The Council should follow implementation closely.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands considers it crucial that civilians under threat are protected. Let me highlight three key areas to act:

1. PoC in Peacekeeping

People and communities under threat, with nowhere to go, need to know the UN will do anything within its scope to provide protection. They need to know what to expect and not to expect from the mission. What I have to say on this is very brief: Just read, sign and implement the Kigali Principles. This set of action-oriented principles were agreed during the conference on Protection of Civilians organized by Rwanda in the run-up to last year's Leaders Summit on Peacekeeping. I am proud the Kingdom of the Netherlands was one of the first signatories, and am pleased to notice many more countries are joining, following our collective outreach. Let us now start implementing them, systemically, and jointly.

My country looks forward to continuing the collaboration with Rwanda and the US on comprehensive capacity building of civilian and military staff; training people on how to deal with protection

of civilians in peacekeeping operations is essential. The Netherlands is committed to doing this, and preparing a curriculum in close cooperation with the UN, Rwanda and the US. This is also a way of implementing the Kigali Principles. As is the zero tolerance on sexual violence, as is the need to organize missions around intelligence, implementation and a mandate that puts Protection of Civilians at the heart of our actions.

2. PoC in Peacebuilding

Whereas peacekeepers and civilian staff need to act decisively and coordinated to protect civilians under immediate threat, during the peacebuilding process PoC becomes a long-term strategy aiming for the state and its security sector to take on the responsibility to protect their population. This makes security sector reform a key linking pin to find lasting solutions for protecting civilians during post-conflict peacebuilding processes. The ultimate aim remains the same; to improve citizen security.

PoC can only be incorporated in a meaningful way if SSR is people-centered. Perceptions, needs and expectations of communities with regards to their security ought to be the basis of inclusive security sector reforms. The UN can play a conducive and continued role when UN Country Teams work closely with the missions during the peacekeeping phase and continue supporting national processes during post-conflict peacebuilding.

3. PoC and women

“You will only see it once you get it”. This is one of less known expressions of late soccer legend Johan Cruijf. If the empowerment and protection of women and girls is merely an afterthought in our peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities, it means we didn’t get it. How can we talk about people-centered approaches without putting 1325 at the core? Isn’t that what inclusiveness means? If we implement the women, peace and security systematically and strategically, we will be armed to our teeth with the strongest instrument: prevention.

One of the preventive measures is to deploy more women in peace operations. The Kingdom of the Netherlands supports UN Women’s female military officers course, which by now has trained female officers from over 40 countries with the aim to be deployed. I am pleased to say some of them are ready to be deployed. The Office of the Military Advisor is using this roster of trained female military officers in their force generation efforts. Missions with more female personnel, diverse missions so to say, have the opportunity to increase engagement with local women and men, which may enhance the comprehensiveness of obtained intel, and signal early warning of threats to civilians. A powerful preventive tool!

Ladies and gentlemen, it is simple. The blue UN flag needs to stand for protection, for upholding human rights and rule of law.

This implies that each staff member needs to be held accountable for abiding by the UN code of conduct. No exceptions. Sexual violence, abuse and exploitation do not belong in the UN! Accountability and pursuit of justice is of key importance.

The Netherlands, as your partner in peace, justice and development, stands ready to put the protection of civilians at the center of peace operations. I look forward to our debate on the Kigali Principles, and hope to be inspired by all contributions in order to make sure the UN can perform these tasks.

Thank you.