

**STATEMENT BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY  
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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ANGOLA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**CHAIRMAN OF THE AFRICAN GROUP**

**AT THE OPEN DEBATE  
OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL  
ON THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS  
IN ARMED CONFLICT**

**NEW YORK, 20 NOVEMBER 2007**

**Mr. President,**

**On behalf of the African Group, I wish to start by commending you for convening this important meeting dedicated to a topic which constitutes one of the most challenging tasks of our time: the preservation of the life and dignity of millions of civilians affected by armed conflicts.**

**Eight years after the issuance of the first report of the Secretary- General on the issue, our organization has developed a deep understanding of the question, ranging from the identification of different features of temporary conflicts, the relevant international legal instruments, to the necessary measures for an effective protection of civilians in armed conflicts.**

**The Humanitarian Architecture of the United Nations has sufficiently improved by, inter alia, the role played by the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the appointment by the Secretary-General of a Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflicts, a Special Advisor to the Secretary-General**

**on the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities, as well as of a Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on matters relating to the prevention and resolution of conflict. The Secretary-General has also issued specific reports on children in armed conflicts containing concrete proposals.**

**The 2005 World Summit dedicated a special importance to the protection of civilians, while the Security Council has adopted several Presidential Statements and resolutions in particular resolutions 1674 (2006), 1265 (1999) , 1296 (2000) and 1631 (2005). The process of the United Nations reform has also produced bodies, namely, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, whose activities will also impact on the life of civilians in armed conflicts and post conflict situations.**

**The African Group also takes note of the concrete actions proposed by the Secretary-General while expecting the reaction of the Security Council to those concrete proposals. It is our hope that the views of the governments of the**

**countries concerned will be taken into account, in the search for feasible solutions since the protection of their citizens is a prerogative of the national governments.**

**Traditional actors as the International Committee of the Red Cross, and other NGO's, humanitarian agencies and organizations such as the International Migration Organization have also made a valuable contribution to the relief field activities.**

**Important steps have therefore been taken in the identification of the problems and the instruments to address them. The challenge remains the strengthening and coordination in order to facilitate the implementation of the decisions taken in order to effectively protect the civilians in accordance with the principles of neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian assistance.**

**We therefore welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at reinforcing the normative and operational framework for the protection of civilians.**

**In this connection, we reiterate the importance of strengthening the role of the General Assembly, as the Organ which has the primary responsibility for providing policy guidance for United Nations humanitarian operations.**

**We welcome the recent report of the Secretary General S/2007/643 of October 28 which is more than eloquent on the current situation, including the nature of contemporary armed conflicts and the diversity of the actors involved. The report clarifies the increasing role played by the peacekeeping operations and the regional organizations in the protection of civilians, as well as the progress made in the fields of normative framework and the fight against impunity through international justice.**

**The African Group also takes note of the concrete actions proposed by the Secretary-General while expecting the reaction of the Security Council to those concrete proposals. It is our hope that the views of the governments of the countries concerned will be taken into account, in the search for feasible solutions, since the protection of their citizens is a prerogative of the national governments.**

**It is also our view that the Security Council should continue to consider the humanitarian impact of sanctions. On this, the recent report of the Secretary General is rather silent. Concerning refugees, the African Group is of the opinion that more concrete proposals are needed regarding actions aimed at enhancing the assistance to the host countries and communities.**

**Mr. President,**

**The death of millions of civilians whenever it occurs, the attack against peacekeepers, the sexual violence and other conflict**

related harmful practices should be condemned. The African Group is fully supportive to end impunity for those involved in atrocities against civilians and favors.

Regarding sexual violence, Africa has long ago taken the lead in the condemnation of this dreadful practice by adopting, in Maputo, in July 2003, a Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of Women in Africa, in which African States committed themselves to, I quote: “ *undertake to protect asylum seeking women, refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons, against all forms of violence, rape and other forms of sexual exploitation, and to ensure that such acts are considered war crimes, genocide and/or crime against humanity and that their perpetrators are brought to justice before a competent criminal jurisdiction.*” End of quote.

We therefore welcome the important step taken by our Organization by the recent adoption of the resolution A/C3/62/L.16/Rev. 2 on the Elimination of Rape and other

**Forms of Sexual Violence.** The interest of the African continent in the issue vindicates the active role played by the African Group during the consultations on the issue with interested delegations.

The Constitutive Act establishing the African Union stressed the responsibility of member States to protect their citizens while reserving to the African Union the right to intervene, including through multilateral military force, in respect of grave circumstances: namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity or situations that pose serious threat to legitimate order to restore peace and security in a member State. Furthermore, the African Union recognizes military intervention as the last resort, stressing non-military measures such as dialogue for the peaceful resolution of conflicts as means to the best solution of conflicts.

We hope that the Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Central African Republic and Chad with a specific mandate to protect civilians

**will contribute to the improvement of the situation in those areas and serve as a source of important lessons regarding the protection of civilians in armed conflicts.**

**Mr. President,**

**Finally, we are clearly interested in seeing more progress in the peace process in Darfur.**

**I thank you.**