



Security Council

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Letter dated 14 May 2021 from the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In its capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of May, China intends to organize an open debate on the theme “Protection of civilians in armed conflict” on 25 May.

In order to guide the discussions on this topic, China has prepared a concept note (see annex).

Member States and observers wishing to participate are invited to submit a written statement of approximately 500 words through the eSpeakers module on the e-deleGATE+ platform (see enclosure).

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

(Signed) **Zhang Jun**
Permanent Representative and
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 14 May 2021 from the Permanent Representative of China 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”

I. Background

1. During its presidency of the Security Council for the month of May 2021, China will convene an open debate on the theme “Protection of civilians in armed conflict”, to be held on 25 May. The participants will consider the annual report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict ([S/2021/423](#)).

2. Since the inclusion of “protection of civilians in armed conflict” as a matter of which the Security Council is seized in 1999, it has been one of the priorities of the Council and receives broad attention from the international community. Over the past year, civilians have continued to bear the brunt of armed conflicts, with civilian casualties reported in several armed conflicts. According to the Secretary-General in his annual report, in Afghanistan, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan documented 8,820 civilian casualties in 2020, of whom 30 per cent were children. The urbanization of conflicts, damage to and destruction of civilian infrastructure and the use of explosive weapons in populated areas have been of particular concern. Conflicts also caused acute hunger, environmental deterioration and large-scale displacement and exacerbated vulnerabilities in different contexts.

3. It has been five years since the Security Council adopted resolution [2286 \(2016\)](#) on the protection of medical personnel and facilities in armed conflicts. Unfortunately, the implementation of resolution [2286 \(2016\)](#) has met with multiple challenges and difficulties. Violence, threats and attacks against medical care in violation of international humanitarian law persist. In the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, already-weak health-care systems in armed conflicts have been overwhelmed and health-care services have been undermined at a time when they are most needed. Among all measures and good practices to protect medical care in armed conflicts, the urgency of ensuring equitable, safe and unhindered delivery and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines in areas of armed conflict is widely recognized.

4. Amid the alarming facts, the Secretary-General also pointed out in his report that ceasefires in Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic and parties’ shifting focus to the pandemic and related safety measures contributed to the reported 43 per cent reduction in civilian deaths and injuries from the use of explosive weapons in 2020 compared with 2019. Efforts have continued to achieve a global ceasefire against the backdrop of the pandemic so as to continuously reduce civilian casualties.

II. Objective

5. The open debate is intended to deepen dialogue on the issue of the protection of civilians in armed conflict, to draw attention to the global state of the protection of civilians, with a focus on the protection of medical care, to urge compliance with international humanitarian law by all parties to conflicts and to mobilize greater efforts by the international community towards a global ceasefire, conflict prevention and conflict resolution, among other things.

III. Focus of discussion

6. The discussion may focus on the following questions:

(a) How could the international community, in particular the Security Council, better support the global ceasefire appeal made by the Secretary-General?

(b) How to effectively address the root causes of conflict and prevent conflicts, so as to avoid human suffering from the very beginning?

(c) What are the good practices in building the capacity of States and the resilience of populations, so as to enable States to fulfil their primary responsibility to protect the civilian population?

(d) What more could be done to implement Security Council resolution [2286 \(2016\)](#) to protect medical care? How is the implementation of resolution [2286 \(2016\)](#) related to the implementation of resolution [2565 \(2021\)](#), to ensure the equitable, safe and unhindered delivery and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines in areas of armed conflict?

(e) How could the international community help to break the cycle between conflict and food insecurity? What should be included in the integrated response to address the multiple drivers of acute food insecurity, taking into consideration the situation of a specific State and its national priorities?

(f) How to integrate the implementation of related Security Council resolutions and presidential statements in connection with the item entitled "Protection of civilians in armed conflict", including the newly adopted resolution [2573 \(2021\)](#), to ensure full respect for and compliance with international humanitarian law?

IV. Format of the meeting

7. The meeting will take the form of a videoconference, to be chaired by the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Zhang Jun. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer, and a civil society representative will brief the participants. Non-members of the Council are encouraged to submit written statements, through the eSpeakers module on the e-deleGATE+ platform, which will be included in the official record of the discussion.

Enclosure

Guidance note: submission of written statements

Security Council open debate on the theme “Protection of civilians in armed conflict”

With reference to the Security Council open debate on the theme “Protection of civilians in armed conflict”, to be held as a videoconference on 25 May 2021, delegations may submit written statements through the eSpeakers module.

Member States wishing to do so should transmit their statements in Microsoft Word format with a cover letter, duly signed by the Permanent Representative or Chargé d’affaires a.i. and addressed to the President of the Security Council, no later than the date of the meeting, 25 May 2021. The statements will be published as part of an official compilation document containing the interventions submitted in connection with the open debate.

- Delegates are invited to contact their access focal points to be granted access to the eSpeakers module on the e-deleGATE+ platform.
- Delegates can submit written statements by clicking on the eSpeakers sub-item in the Security Council menu item.

For technical support related to user logins and passwords, please contact the Office of Information and Communications Technology help desk at 212 963 3333 or by email at missions-support@un.int.

For other questions related to the open debate, please contact the Security Council Affairs Division at dppa-scsb3@un.org.
