



# Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

**8556**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Thursday, 20 June 2019, 9.30 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

---

*President:* Mr. Alotaibi . . . . . (Kuwait)

*Members:*

Belgium . . . . .	Mr. Bogaert
China . . . . .	Mr. Yao Shaojun
Côte d'Ivoire . . . . .	Mr. Ipo
Dominican Republic . . . . .	Mr. Singer Weisinger
Equatorial Guinea . . . . .	Mr. Esono Mbengono
France . . . . .	Mrs. Gasri
Germany . . . . .	Mr. Licharz
Indonesia . . . . .	Mr. Syihab
Peru . . . . .	Mr. Duclos
Poland . . . . .	Ms. Wronecka
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Kuzmin
South Africa . . . . .	Mr. Van Shalkwyk
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Allen
United States of America . . . . .	Ms. Norman-Chalet

## Agenda

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

---

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

19-18535 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



*The meeting was called to order at 9.30 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Protection of civilians in armed conflict**

**The President** (*spoke in Arabic*): Members have before them a list of countries that have requested to participate in this meeting in accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. In the absence of any objections, I propose that they be invited.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2019/503, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Poland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and that has been sponsored by the countries that appear on the list that is also before Council members.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

*A vote was taken by show of hands.*

*In favour:*

Belgium, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, France, Germany, Indonesia, Kuwait, Peru, Poland, Russian Federation, South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

**The President** (*spoke in Arabic*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2475 (2019).

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

**Ms. Wroniecka** (Poland): We are very pleased to see the strong support from all the members of the Security Council for the first-ever resolution on this important, yet often overlooked, issue (resolution 2475 (2019)). The promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities has been a long-standing priority of Poland's. We are proud to have brought this issue to the attention of the Council for the first time. We would like to express our

gratitude to our co-penholder, the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, for its excellent cooperation on this important topic. As well, we would like to thank all the other members of the Security Council for their constructive engagement and support. We also thank all the sponsors of the resolution.

Since the beginning of our work on the resolution, we set ourselves three goals we wanted to achieve: first, strengthening data collection and reporting on persons with disabilities; secondly, building capacity and knowledge on the needs and rights with persons with disabilities, as well as awareness among peacekeepers and peacebuilders; and, last but not least, we sought to empower and engage persons with disabilities in the areas of conflict prevention and resolution, reconciliation, reconstruction and peacebuilding. We want to make sure that persons with disabilities and their organizations are not the subject of the discussions of the Security Council, but our partners instead.

Just last week, the twelfth Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities took place. In his opening statement, the Secretary-General reminded us of the very wise words of Nujeen Mustafa, a brave young woman with a disability who recently shared her story with the Security Council (see S/PV.8515). On that occasion she told us that "no one left behind" should not just be words that members say, but that

"Council members can and should do more to ensure that people with disabilities are included in all aspects of their work. We cannot wait any longer." (*S/PV.8515, p. 5*)

She also reminded us that persons with disabilities are often forgotten during times of peace as well, and even more forgotten during times of war. We sincerely hope that this landmark resolution will bring about change for Nujeen and the millions of other persons with disabilities. Poland stands ready to continue our efforts to make sure persons with disabilities are not left behind.

Finally, allow me to thank our partners in the negotiations, namely, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur on persons with disabilities, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Disability Alliance and other civil

society organizations. Without their strong support and expertise, we would not have been able to adopt such a strong text. Finally, I thank the Kuwaiti presidency for allowing us to adopt the resolution early in the morning today.

**Ms. Norman-Chalet** (United States of America): The United States was pleased to sponsor this important resolution on persons with disabilities in armed conflict (resolution 2475 (2019)). We thank Poland and the United Kingdom for their tremendous and tireless efforts to conduct a thorough and transparent negotiation process.

This ground-breaking resolution is a significant step forward in mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities across the United Nations by bringing the issue here, an area of the United Nations where we have not done enough on the topic. Our delegation knows first-hand the challenges we face in mainstreaming disability rights across the United Nations system, including physical access here at Headquarters. We are therefore pleased to see a reference in the text to the United Nations disability inclusion strategy.

Persons with disabilities are already marginalized in times of peace; their vulnerability and further marginalization increase drastically in armed conflict. Persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence as compared to persons without disabilities. Support mechanisms for accessing basic services — such as water, sanitation, food, shelter and health care — might be disrupted as well, and existing environmental, communication and attitudinal barriers in accessing services could be further exacerbated. Moreover, humanitarian services are often not adapted to ensure that persons with disabilities can access them. As a result, people with disabilities are too often left out and left behind. This short but effective resolution addresses the challenges that persons with disabilities face, as well as concrete actions that the Council and the international community can take to address them. The United States especially welcomes the paragraphs on data collection, capacity-building and the meaningful participation and leadership of persons with disabilities during every stage of a conflict. We also look forward to more regular briefings by people with disabilities and their representative organizations, as well as humanitarian organizations and other stakeholders. Our hope is that this becomes a regular part of the Council's work in the way that we address other related issues.

**Mr. Kuzmin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia supported today's resolution 2475 (2019), as we share the document's humanitarian principles and its aims to improve support and protection for persons with disabilities in areas of conflict. However, we feel compelled to point out that a number of its provisions nonetheless go beyond the mandate of the Security Council. In our view, the call in operative paragraph 11 to comply with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities pertains only to article 11 of the Convention, which relates to situations within the Council's purview.

We believe that activities for the protection of vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, must be carried out strictly in line with the tried-and-tested principle of the so-called division of labour in the United Nations system, and that genuinely constructive efforts to protect persons with disabilities are possible only when each body deals with the issue in a way that is fully consistent with the mandate entrusted to it.

The Russian Federation assumes that operative paragraph 10 will be applied without detriment to the Security Council's working methods and in accordance with its provisional rules of procedure. We strongly support the position that all groups in society should receive equal protection during armed conflicts, as laid down in international law, and that the consideration of one category of people should not be at the expense of any other group.

There is no point in inventing new international legal concepts that supposedly plug so-called gaps in the protection regime under the Geneva Conventions. We do not need to be distracted by endlessly creating new categories of persons who need special protection under international humanitarian law. In practice, such ideas can only weaken the protection provided to civilians. The Council's job is concentrating on practical work to ensure the protection of civilians within the framework of existing international legal norms and its existing mandate.

**Mr. Singer Weisinger** (Dominican Republic): I am delivering this statement on behalf of Belgium, Germany, Indonesia, Kuwait, Peru and my own country, the Dominican Republic.

In April, the Council had the honour of listening to Nujeen Mustafa, the first person with a disability to brief the Security Council (see S/PV.8515). Her story about how she left Syria and arrived in Germany in a

wheelchair was so compelling that we will remember it for years to come. Her willpower and resilience are an example to all of us.

The adage that no one should be left behind means going beyond simple words. The situation of people with disabilities in armed conflicts deserves more attention from the Council than it has received in the past. It touches directly on human rights and international humanitarian law and is inextricably linked to peace and security. That is why we thank Poland and the United Kingdom for bringing this important text before the Council today. With resolution 2475 (2019), the Security Council affirms that inclusiveness is important everywhere. The importance of the issue was also highlighted by the Secretary-General on the occasion of the twelfth Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, when he stated,

“I want our humanitarian, development and peace operations to fully recognize and advance the rights of persons with disabilities”.

In situations of armed conflict, people with disabilities can be disproportionately affected and often excluded from the humanitarian response. The actors in the field should therefore listen to and empower persons with disabilities in order to assess how their needs can be met. Governments of countries in conflict should ensure access to basic services as well as education, health care, information and communications technology and transportation systems. All the parties to a conflict should take measures to guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities and protect them from violence. When a conflict is over, they need access to justice if their rights have been violated.

In order to focus our response, we need reliable data. And we should not forget people with disabilities that are not visible or who are subject to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

The rights of persons with disabilities are enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is a landmark of international law and in the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. It contains explicit provisions for Governments on ensuring the protection of persons with disabilities in humanitarian emergencies, including conflict situations. People with disabilities should be able to enjoy those rights, free from discrimination and stigma. We therefore call on all United Nations Member

States to ratify the Convention and fully implement its provisions.

In conclusion, in order to achieve a more durable peace, it is fundamental to include persons with disabilities and the organizations that represent them in conflict resolution.

**Mr. Yao Shaojun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China attaches great importance to the issue of persons with disabilities in conflict. We support parties to conflicts in providing protection tailored to the special needs of people with disabilities in accordance with international humanitarian law. Efforts should also focus on reducing disabilities as a result of conflict.

The Council's unanimous adoption today of resolution 2475 (2019) demonstrates the principled consensus of all parties on this issue. China voted in favour of the resolution. The key to tackling the issue lies in stamping out the root causes of armed conflict. The Council should act in earnest on its primary duty to maintain international peace and security and work assiduously to prevent and address conflicts through dialogue, negotiations and consultations in order to minimize the impact of armed conflict on vulnerable groups, including those with disabilities.

The Council should not replicate or replace the work of human rights agencies or social welfare agencies dedicated to those with disabilities. This issue is a sub-item under the agenda for the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and should be addressed in full observance of all Council resolutions and agreements on that agenda. The Governments of countries in situations of armed conflict should play a primary role and take on the primary responsibility in tackling matters related to persons with disabilities. The international community should give them assistance with capacity-building, and non-governmental organizations should play a constructive role while fully respecting the sovereignty of the countries concerned.

**Mrs. Gasri** (France) (*spoke in French*): France also welcomes the Council's adoption of resolution 2475 (2019) today. It constitutes a major step forward, as it is the first time the Security Council has dedicated a resolution specifically to the rights of persons with disabilities in the framework of its agenda on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

We warmly thank the co-penholders, Poland and the United Kingdom, for their excellent work in recent

weeks. We pay tribute to all civil society actors, in particular Humanity and Inclusion, formerly Handicap International, who work tirelessly to promote and defend the rights of people with disabilities in times of peace as well as war.

Although 15 per cent of the world's population lives with a disability, we all must and can do more to defend the rights of people with disabilities, ensure that their specific protection needs are taken into account and combat discrimination, in particular during armed conflict. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, whose universal ratification we support, and the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action are vital tools. We should ensure their full implementation. The Council can count on France's ongoing and decisive support in that endeavour.

**Mr. Allen** (United Kingdom): As a co-penholder, the United Kingdom would like to echo the words of the Polish representative, Ambassador Wronecka, and thank the Security Council members for their constructive and thoughtful contributions during the negotiation process. The United Kingdom would like to express special thanks to the Polish delegation for its commitment in this joint endeavour. Poland's initiative last year to host the Arria Formula meeting on this issue proved to be decisive in focusing the collective attention of the Council.

I also thank Russia and China for voting in favour of resolution 2475 (2019) despite the doubts they expressed today. I agree with my Russian colleague and friend that we should not be creating new legal obligations, and we have been careful not to do so. We

agree with the fact that all citizens and civilians should be protected. We also agree that that should not just be declaratory and that there should be concrete actions, as indeed there are in this resolution.

Empowering people with disabilities leads to better decisions and more effective outcomes for communities, nations and the world. Resolution 2475 (2019) is a vital first step in the Council's role in mitigating and better understanding the disproportionate impact that conflict has on persons with disabilities. As we heard from the inspirational Syrian Nujeen Mustafa earlier this year (see S/PV.8515), active participation is essential to improving the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of armed conflict, as well as in humanitarian response plans and post-conflict recovery.

Resolution 2475 (2019) offers a clear statement that persons with disabilities want to, can and must participate and lead decisions that affect their lives. It recognizes the protection needs of all affected civilian populations and calls for safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to all people in need of assistance. We look forward to increased information and recommendations from the Secretary-General in both his thematic and geographic reports to the Security Council, along with the inclusion of data disaggregated by disability. That will further improve the evidence-based approach that we want to be taken in response to the Council's decision-making.

This landmark resolution is recognition that there should be nothing about us without us. We hope that the actions agreed start the process of answering that call.

*The meeting rose at 9.55 a.m.*