



**Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
to the United Nations**

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Statement

by

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Nations

Open Debate: “Protection of civilians in armed conflict”

Security Council

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Thank you, Mr. President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the A3+1, namely Kenya, Niger, Tunisia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

We thank USG Lowcock, Mr. Maurer and Dr. Nemat for their valuable briefings.

Mr. President,

The A3+1 reaffirms its steadfast commitment to addressing the most urgent and enduring protection challenges, created by the intersections of protracted conflict, climate-related security risks, historically produced socio-economic instability, the global health crisis, and related humanitarian impacts.

In the past few months, the Security Council has narrowed its focus on the protection of infrastructure indispensable to the survival of civilian populations, and on conflict and food security. Today, we take this opportunity to address further protection concerns in relation to the global health and economic crises, conflict prevention and resolution, and compliance with international law by making five key points.

1. First, the A3+1 condemns, in the strongest terms, all acts of violence against civilians. The use of explosive weapons, the

continued threat of explosive remnants of war and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons place millions of civilians at risk of displacement, injury and death. Women, children and persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected. We express our deep alarm at the loss of civilian lives and the high number of casualties resulting from the recent escalation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in East-Jerusalem and the hostilities related to the Gaza strip. We welcome the ceasefire reached and call on the parties to uphold the agreement and to act seriously to implement it. We also stress the need for immediate provision of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian civilian population, particularly in Gaza, and call for the expeditious and unimpeded delivery of such humanitarian assistance.

2. Our next point relates to accountability. Impunity for actors who violate International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, and all relevant legal frameworks on the protection of civilians, cannot be tolerated. Likewise, there must be accountability for sexual exploitation and abuse committed under the UN flag. One egregious example is the insufficient redress for survivors and victims of sexual violence in Haiti. We call for swift and appropriate survivor-centred actions to not only end impunity, but also to meet the ongoing psychosocial needs of survivors and victims. We further welcome the positive steps taken by the

Secretary-General including Troop and Police Contributing Countries to prevent, respond and take remedial action against sexual exploitation and abuse.

3. The A3+1 reiterates its concerns about the living conditions of migrants and refugees, notably those intercepted at sea and disembarked on Libyan soil, where migrant women, in overcrowded detention centers, face violations of all kinds, including sexual violence. In view of this situation, it is necessary to review the policy of disembarking migrants and refugees intercepted at sea on Libyan soil, where, moreover, the presence of foreign fighters and mercenaries continue to jeopardize stabilization efforts.

4. Turning to the global health crisis, Mr. President, the pandemic has both heightened the exposure of women and girls to sexual and gender-based violence and reduced their access to justice, reparations, and critical healthcare and other psychosocial services. Overall, COVID-19 has emphasised the long-term consequences, for civilians, of attacks on health, educational and other critical civilian infrastructure, including water and sanitation services. we must redouble our efforts to prevent and redress attacks and threats against the wounded and sick, medical and humanitarian personnel, medical transport and equipment, as

well as attacks against hospitals and other medical facilities in line with resolution 2286 (2016).

Further, the A3+1 underscores the need for the accelerated implementation of UNSCR 2565 (2021). This requires increased support from the international community to regional institutions and governments to ensure inclusive national vaccination, that targets all civilians., including refugees, displaced persons, persons with disabilities, detained persons, migrants and persons living in areas controlled by non-State armed groups. There is also an urgent need to expand production capacities in developing countries, including across the African continent, and in support of equitable vaccine access.

5. Our fifth point is that durable peace and long-term protection of civilians require ongoing attention to the root causes of conflict. Continued and enhanced cooperation and coordination among key stakeholders within the multilateral system, regional institutions, national governments, communities and civil society are critical. Regionally derived and nationally owned pathways to security and development that embed climate, gender and age responsive approaches, such as the AU's "Silencing the Guns" and "Agenda 2063," must receive the full support of the international community. This is the surest way to guarantee enhanced and sustainable lives and livelihoods for civilians in

conflict and post-conflict contexts in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. Access to quality education to all children, especially in conflict-affected areas, remains critical. As such, the A3+1 condemn all attacks against schools and related personnel.

Before closing Mr. President, we wish to add that:

- Application of protection of civilians policies and operational guidelines by international, regional and national security forces is critical. In this regard, we commend the continued implementation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force Compliance Framework to prevent civilians from harm during counterterrorism and other military operations. This framework is important in promoting national ownership and enhancing the capacities of the G5 Sahel countries, to that effect. Efforts to enhance compliance in PKOs and national security forces must occur alongside the use of force to secure peace.
- Developing conflict early warning system through community alert networks and public information and reporting systems will help PKOs gather and analyse information on threats to civilians in a timely manner.
- PKOs and SPMs in collaboration with the Peacebuilding Commission must continue to work with governments to strengthen state institutions. This includes support for national

capacity development to protect civilians during mission transition.

- Finally, there is need to bolster unarmed approaches to the protection of civilians (UAP), drawing on the success stories registered in regions of countries such as the Central African Republic, Mali and South Sudan. A combination of local and national ownership, and UN mission support for local conflict resolution mechanisms, mediation and locally derived pacific solutions to conflict, are far more likely to register long-term success.

I thank you.