

General Assembly Debate Statement: H.E. Mr. Youssoufou Bamba, Permanent Representative of the Mission of Cote d'Ivoire to the United Nations.

Unofficial Transcription from webcast

[Translation does not begin for a while]...these two examples which strengthen the reasons which have led the heads of state and governments during the global summit in 2005 to reaffirm this principle of the Responsibility to Protect pursuant to paragraphs 138 and 139 of the final document of the summit. From our point of view the Responsibility to Protect was for too long passed over in silence whereas the need to protect the populations against genocide, crimes of war, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity, all of this was omnipresent in conflict situations. Recent developments which reflect greater visibility which we have noted regarding these principles should, in our view, aim to incorporate these principles both at a regional as well as international levels into the architecture of the collective security systems as well as the preventive diplomacy, conflict settlement management, prevention, peacekeeping and peace-building mechanisms. For my statement I would like to focus on two specific examples. Firstly we have the example of West Africa and then we have the very specific example of my country Cote d'Ivoire.

Now, turning to West Africa specifically one can look at the pioneering example of the intervention by the ECOWAS forces ECOMOG during the first conflict in Liberia in 1990 which fits in perfectly with the operationalization of the third pillar of the Responsibility to Protect. Indeed, the initiative to deploy a West African multinational force to restore order in Liberia was a response to an immediate emergency situation and putting an end to mass atrocities which were being committed. This ECOWAS presence has contributed to facilitating negotiations within the framework of the Security Council or the United Nations followed by the deployment of UN Blue Helmets to Liberia a little later on. Subsequently the legal framework for these interventions was organized in the case of ECOWAS by the adoption in 1991 of the Boutra principles declaration on the fundamental human rights of ECOWAS's citizens and in 1999 by the setting up of the conflict settlement management and prevention, peacekeeping and peace-building mechanisms. This collective security mechanism institutionalized the framework for ECOWAS's intervention for creation of the ECOWAS Standby Force also known as ESF. These mechanisms were finalized in 2001 by the additional protocol on the democracy and good governance and in 2008 by the framework for the prevention of conflicts by ECOWAS. It behooves me to recall here that ECOWAS also intervened in Sierra Leone in 1997 and Guinea-Bissau in 1998, in Cote d'Ivoire in 2002 and is currently deployed in Guinea-Bissau and is awaiting the Security Council's authorization for deployment to Mali.

The second example is the specific case of Cote d'Ivoire. Regarding this case a third pillar of the Responsibility to Protect did apply related to the implementation of resolution 1975. On March 30, 2011 the Security Council of the United Nations, concerned by the growing violence in Cote d'Ivoire resulting from the mass use of heavy weapons by the torturing regime of the former president decided to come up with a strong response when faced with the responsibility which continued to deteriorate through the adoption of the resolution 1975 which contains the following objectives. Firstly, the strengthening of the mandate of UNOCI with a specific mandate for the protection of civilian populations in danger. Secondly, the imposition of sanctions against Ivoirian individuals who, while refusing to recognize the results of the vote, decided instead to incite violence and hatred. Thirdly the prohibition of the use of heavy weapons against civilian populations and fourthly the intervention of the ICC to prosecute and bring to justice the perpetrators of massive violations of human rights in Cote d'Ivoire. On the 6, 7 and 9 of April, 2011 witness an unprecedented escalation of attacks against the camp of the former president against the seat of the legitimate government and the headquarters of UNOCI.

Faced with these unacceptable actions including the continued use of heavy weapons against civilian populations and the Blue Helmets as well as the attack against the headquarters of a legitimate government, the Gulf Hotel, the Secretary General of the United Nations was forced to prevent a genocide to take place in Cote d'Ivoire, to order the mission following consultations with member states and the technical services of the United Nations, to take all necessary steps to prevent the use of such weapons pursuant to resolutions 1975 dated 2011 and 1962 [dated] 2010 to the Security Council. On the 9th of April, 2011, 5:00 PM Abidjan time UNOCI launched a military operation to prevent the use of heavy weapons threatening the security of civilian populations in Abidjan and all the civilian and military personnel of the United Nations in Cote d'Ivoire. The French Legion Forces lent the necessary support to UNOCI pursuant to paragraph 17 of resolution 1962 of the Security Council. Finally on 11 April 2011 the former president was arrested and the democratically elected president, Mr. Alassane Ouattara, this following UN certification of the presidential elections, was able to fully assume the prerogatives of the office of the president of Cote d'Ivoire. This post-electoral crisis which lasted five months claimed 3,000 lives, 1 million IDP's and 500,000 refugees.

With conclusion two comments. Firstly, given the fact that cases of the implementation of the third pillar of the Responsibility to Protect are quite clearly the result of the failure of the two previous pillars, we must focus in post-crisis situations on education and awareness-raising regarding these concepts in all elements of society especially armed elements within the framework inter alia of SSR and DDR. At both these levels significant support by the international community is necessary. Secondly, given the fact that its regional and sub-regional organizations which are first on the ground when a conflict erupts they must apply the Responsibility to Protect principle and to implement it as part of their respective mechanisms for the settled management of conflicts as well as their collective security arrangements. The leadership shown by the League of Arab states during the crisis in Libya served just as the ongoing ECOWAS commitment in conflicts in Western Africa including those currently underway in Guinea-Bissau and Mali are encouraging. And finally I would like to conclude my statement by echoing the Secretary General of the United Nations and stating that the Responsibility to Protect has finally come of age and the international community must apply it to prevent the emergence of situations similar to the current one in Syria. Thank you.