



**PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**



**Security Council High Level Open Debate
on the Protection of Civilians in armed conflict
22 May 2025**

Greece's Statement delivered
by H.E. the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, Mr. George Gerapetritis

First of all, I thank Mr. Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Sima Bahous, UN Under-Secretary-General and UN Women Executive Director, Ms. Mirjana Spoljaric, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Ms. Janti Soeripto, President and Chief Executive Officer of the NGO "Save the Children US" for their insightful remarks.

Today, we encounter a multitude of severe crises: aggression, forced displacement, climate change, food insecurity, public health challenge, and malicious use of digital technology. These challenges form the backdrop to the devastating impact of armed conflict on civilians around the world.

And I note what President Spoljaric mentioned about the surge in armed conflicts, today actively 130.

Almost 2,500 years ago, the Athenian historian Thucydides wrote that "war is a violent teacher". These words still resonate. 80 years after the end of WWII, we find ourselves in one of the most critical periods in modern History. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has reached catastrophic proportions, as no aid is let into Gaza for more than two months now. With more than 50,000 Palestinians dead, the level of human suffering is unprecedented, and the need for the respect of International Humanitarian Law, and more specifically for the Four Geneva Conventions, remains ever crucial. Compliance is imperative as Under-Secretary Fletcher just mentioned.

In Europe, the 2022 invasion of Ukraine by Russia has an indelible effect on civilians. Attacks with heavy civilian casualties have intensified significantly since the beginning of this year; worldwide, there are conditions that are degrading to human dignity, with displaced populations and people on the verge of poverty, as is the case in the Sudan, DRC, Syria, Yemen, Myanmar, Haiti, to name but a few.

According to the Secretary General's latest annual report, 2024 bore witness to appallingly increased numbers of killed humanitarian personnel and journalists, missing persons increased by more than 16,000, while a staggering 52 million children stayed out of school in countries

affected by armed conflict. We should consider that behind these numbers lie human lives and the rights of future generations.

The reality on the ground of more protracted and complex armed conflicts paints a grim picture of violence and destruction.

This violence has the face and voice of children; of women and girls; of older people; of persons with disabilities, and I recall the dramatic brief of Under-Secretary Bahous. It has the voice of humanitarian personnel, offering much needed life-saving solutions on the ground, and of journalists, trying to ensure accurate reporting on the armed conflict. With regard to the protection of diplomatic personnel, working under dire conditions, it is of paramount importance that the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations is respected by all parties. Attacks or threats of attack are unacceptable.

And especially today we are appalled by the news of the deadly shooting in Washington D.C., which has claimed the lives of two embassy staff members and by shots fired in the vicinity of a foreign diplomat's visit in Jenin, West Bank. We condemn these heinous acts of violence and we call on every side to hold those responsible fully accountable.

With these considerations in mind, allow me to begin by focusing on the single most vulnerable group that I believe we can all agree should be our highest priority in the field of protection. Children. Children in armed conflicts are dying. We consider it a moral imperative to end and prevent any violence against children. I would like to commend the invaluable work by UNICEF, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, as well as the Special Representative of Secretary-General on Violence against Children. Their unwavering commitment reinforces the responsibility of this Organization to place children at the center of peace and security efforts.

As President Soeripto argued, children should not be treated as young adults.

In their efforts to support their families and communities in armed conflicts, women, including caregivers, often experience physical, sexual and psychological violence.

The death toll of humanitarian workers in 2024 has become "the deadliest on record", with the vast majority losing their lives in Gaza. As the Secretary-General mentions in his report, disinformation campaigns and spread of harmful information, further eroded trust in humanitarian actors, reduced their operational effectiveness and placed humanitarian personnel at risk.

Yet hope remains when we work together; in the newly adopted Pact for the Future, Member States were able to reaffirm their commitment to effectively address armed conflict, including by enabling humanitarian access, protecting humanitarian personnel and UN and associated personnel, ending impunity and exercising control over the international transfer of conventional arms. To this end, I would like to emphasize the following points:

Acting to ensure compliance of States and parties to conflict with the provisions of international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and of UNSC Resolutions requires a holistic approach. It entails political will and decisive political action, deliberative mechanisms, sustained international cooperation, enhanced monitoring mechanisms, and established coordination structures.

Impunity encourages further aggression. It is, therefore, crucial to ensure accountability for violations of international humanitarian law.

The unimpeded, regular and safe delivery of vital humanitarian aid, in full respect of the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, is critical. Delays compromise the rights of future generations. The synergy of the UN system, international community and NGOs through joint planning and collaboration at field level can ensure timely humanitarian response and enhance protection mechanisms.

It is our special responsibility and duty to ensure that humanitarian personnel and UN and associated personnel are able to fulfill their mandate in safety and security. We also stress the need for full implementation of Resolution 2474 regarding missing persons and fully support the work of the United Nations, among others, through the establishment of the Commission for Missing Persons. It is equally important to highlight the invaluable contribution and the essential leadership of women in times of crisis and to protect them from gender-based violence, including women journalists.

Journalists must fulfill their duties in safety and dignity. This year marks the 10th anniversary of SC Resolution 2222 on protection of journalists and associated media personnel in armed conflict, while next year SC Resolution 1738 on attacks against journalists in armed conflict, penned by France and Greece, turns 20. In modern armed conflicts, journalists usually become targets of hybrid warfare, facing not only violence but also misinformation and hate speech campaigns which undermine their credibility. Such practice is tantamount to reverse propaganda. Finding effective ways to counter harmful narratives and promoting reliable and accurate information is vital.

In this regard, we attach great importance to the use of new technologies in a way that leverages their potential to gather and analyze information, to anticipate and avoid civilian harm.

In conclusion, I would like to make a specific reference to children. The current situation in Gaza brings us face to face with our responsibilities. Today, in the context of the UNSC, this most appropriate forum, we must make abundantly clear that war, violence and propaganda should never deprive a child of the right to grow up; to grow up healthy and hopeful. Thus, it is clear that our collective duty is to defend children in every possible way.

While keeping this in mind, we ought to request the obvious, in the institutional context of the Security Council: the immediate, full, unhindered flow of humanitarian aid at scale into all parts of the Gaza Strip, including food, medicine and essential supplies, combined with a sustainable ceasefire and the release of all hostages. For this reason, Greece, in its capacity as President of the Security Council, will use the monthly meeting on the Middle East on the 28th of May, at the latest, to focus on the urgent humanitarian situation in Gaza.