



## ECOSOC HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS SEGMENT

UN SECRETARIAT, NEW YORK 27-29 June 2016

### **High-Level Panel – Impediments to the Protection of Civilians**

**Wednesday, 29 June 2016; From 10:00 – 13:00**  
**ECOSOC Chamber, New York**

This is one of three high-level interactive panels to be convened during the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, in keeping with this year's theme: *Restoring Humanity and Leaving No One Behind: Working together to reduce people's humanitarian need, risk and vulnerability*. The objective is to reflect and elaborate on the impediments to the protection of civilians in armed conflict and build momentum following the World Humanitarian Summit for action and change.

#### **Background and theme**

Civilian deaths and suffering have continued unabated due to the blatant and shocking lack of respect for international humanitarian and human rights law, with repeated direct attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, indiscriminate attacks, sieges and arbitrary denial of humanitarian access.

Enhancing the protection of civilians across conflicts is essential. This is underscored in the Secretary-General's report for the World Humanitarian Summit and the most recent Secretary-General report on the strengthening of humanitarian coordination.

Priority areas of action include:

- Enhancing respect for and the protection of humanitarian personnel, medical personnel, their means of transport and equipment as well as hospitals and other medical facilities, and the wounded and sick;
- Enhancing people in need's access to humanitarian and medical assistance, notably through systematically condemning and taking action to put an end to any arbitrary withholding of consent to principled humanitarian relief operations;
- Enhancing precautions to minimize harm to civilians and civilian objects as a direct result of hostilities – including by discussing the risk of widespread and predictable harm resulting from the use of wide-area explosive weapons in populated areas and possible measures to address them;
- Systematically documenting and condemning violations, and taking concrete steps to improve accountability as well as justice for victims.

#### **Objectives**

Against this backdrop, the High-Level Panel will focus on the following suggested lead questions:

- What measures should States, the United Nations and other relevant actors take to ensure that all populations in need receive rapid and unimpeded humanitarian assistance, and to enhance respect for and the protection of humanitarian and medical personnel, transports and facilities? What are the challenges?
- What measures should States, the United Nations and other relevant actors take to ensure principled humanitarian action in armed conflict, including in terms of administrative, operational and due diligence measures? What are the challenges?
- What concrete next steps to promote the adoption of practical measures by parties to conflict to minimize harm to civilian and civilian objects caused by hostilities - including by discussing the risk of widespread and predictable pattern of harm resulting from the use of wide-area explosive weapons in populated areas?
- What would be the main aspects of a global effort to improve compliance with international humanitarian law and other norms that contribute to the protection of civilians in armed conflict (including relevant Security Council and GA resolutions)?

- Under which conditions would better and more systematic monitoring, analysis and reporting on IHL implementation contribute to political action in order to prevent violations, enhance compliance, and ensure accountability?
- What role does independent fact-finding play in identifying lessons learned, establishing accountability and addressing the grievances of victims? What measures should States, the United Nations and other relevant actors take to promote independent fact-finding?
- What role do international criminal justice institutions play in addressing violations of IHL?