

Delegation from the French Republic

Position Paper for the Security Council

The topics before the United Nations (UN) Security Council (SC) are: Impact of Covid-19 on Peace and Security; and Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict. The French Republic strongly believes in the importance of guarding peace and security throughout the Covid-19 pandemic as well as in armed conflicts. Therefore, France promotes all solutions and discussions to the above-mentioned topics.

I. Impact of Covid-19 on Peace and Security

There have been 410.565.868 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 5.810.880 deaths reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) worldwide. In France, there have been 21.106.470 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 131.890 deaths (15/02/2022). The vaccinations have been available for more than a year, however, while some Member States reached herd immunity quickly, the lowest vaccination rate worldwide is 1.6%. This global inequality concerning vaccination supply affects everyone since, if herd immunity is not reached in every part of the world, new and dangerous variants of the virus can and will appear – possibly even one that is resistant to the current vaccination. Facing this threat and the many threats the virus already poses, the French Republic is deeply committed to finding solutions to stop the pandemic and its negative impact on peace and security.

Recognizing that the Covid-19 pandemic can only be turned into an endemic disease by taking action globally, the French Republic highly welcomes the two thematic resolutions addressing the effects of Covid-19 on peace and security by the SC: S/RES/2532 (2020) *The maintenance of international peace and security* and S/RES/2565 (2021) *Maintenance of international peace and security*. Additionally, France recognizes General Assembly (GA) resolutions A/RES/74/270 *Global Solidarity to Fight the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)* and A/RES/74/274 *International Cooperation to Ensure Global Access to Medicines, Vaccines and Medical Equipment to Face COVID-19* and the World Health Organization's role in the fight against Covid-19. As invited to do in S/RES/2656, France decided to donate a great amount of vaccination doses to other Member States. As the first Member State worldwide, France not only contributed to COVAX through financial donations, but also through donations of vaccine doses France purchased itself. The French Republic committed itself to pass on 120 million vaccine doses to developing countries until July 2022. Until now, 75 million doses have already been donated. France is also active in developing production capacities for vaccines. A technology hub in cooperation with Biovac and Afrigen in which African experts are trained to produce mRNA vaccines has been built, of which 50% were financed by France. The French Republic intends to support similar projects in other African Member States in order for the African continent that currently produces only 1% of the vaccine doses worldwide to eventually cover its own needs.

The pandemic slowly seems to be coming to an end. Therefore, the French Republic is convinced that reaching herd immunity through vaccinations should be the priority of the SC's meeting. Covid-19 poses many threats to international peace and security, especially since governments and local authorities focus their efforts on minimizing the spread of the virus and have less capacities to fight e.g. armed militias. These threats can be fought by the international community – however, the most effective way to fight all the threats the pandemic poses at once is to fight the virus through vaccinations. Only in that manner can the probability of new, more dangerous variants be minimized. Therefore, the French Republic calls upon its fellow Member States to take action in developing vaccine production facilities, especially in Member States of the global south. In order for the production capacities to be maximized, France would welcome Covid-19 vaccination patent liftings that would make it possible to produce significantly more vaccines which, in light of the global vaccination rate of 54.9%, is necessary. France also suggests implementing a global mRNA training facility where experts can train those in charge locally to produce mRNA vaccines and work with the technology. This would not only help with Covid-19 vaccine production, but also with spreading knowledge about this promising technology that could contribute to the fight against many other diseases, too. The training facility could be financed by volunteer donations and possibly by COVAX since it enables those who are in need of the vaccine to produce it themselves. After the manufacturing of vaccines has successfully been scaled up, international partnerships to scale up distribution capabilities need to be developed. In this regard, France promotes the implementation of safe corridors for vaccine distribution. Covid-19 cases within peacekeeping staff regularly result in isolation of troops which endanger the success of existing missions. Hence, the French Republic suggests prioritizing peacekeeping staff when it comes to vaccination distribution, especially concerning possible future vaccines adjusted to variants of the virus. If this does not show sufficient effects and peacekeeping staff refuses to get vaccinated, the next step

could be to introduce a vaccination mandate for peacekeeping staff in order to protect them and ensure their success. Lastly, France expresses its concern about the decline in democracy during the pandemic. Some leaders have used emergency legislation to consolidate their power and lockdowns have declined the opportunities for citizen participation. Therefore, France would look forward to working together with fellow Member States to create a program to advance society's politicization and participation in the democratic process after the end of pandemic measures.

II. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

Until today, the vast majority of peacekeeping missions are operations to protect civilians in armed conflict. Statistics show clearly that the topic at hand is of utmost importance to the international community: In 2020, the UN recorded at least 1,036 civilian deaths in the Syrian Arab Republic and 8,820 in Afghanistan, worldwide 6,766 civilian casualties from explosive devices only were recorded. The numbers are alarming, although the number of civilian deaths decreased due to the focus on Covid-19 and the resulting ceasefire. After the end of the pandemic, numbers are likely to rise again – therefore, now is the time to improve methods of protecting civilians in armed conflict in order to guard international peace and security.

The French Republic fully supports SC resolution S/RES/1674 (2006) *Protection of Civilians* in noting that deliberate targeting of civilians in armed conflict constitutes a threat to international peace and security and violates international humanitarian law (IHL). France fully agrees with the Fourth *Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War* that civilians are entitled to protection in all cases of conflict and is committed to delivering that protection. Concerning the issue of women, France especially welcomes SC resolution S/RES/2535 (2020) *Maintenance of international peace and security* in promoting greater women participation. In light of that struggle, France would like to highlight the Secretary-General's Global Call Campaign. The French Republic is proud to be active in the fight for women's rights and participation as well as against sexual violence. France is especially glad to have been the first state to contribute to a fund for survivors of sexual violence created by Nobel Peace Prize winners Mr. Mukwege and Ms. Murad as well as to support women's movements in countries of the South by establishing a fund of €120 million. During the French presidency of the SC in 2019, France has made the strengthening of respect for IHL a priority and, together with Germany, presented a Call for Humanitarian Action that is now endorsed by 47 Member States and the European Union. In addition, France is proud to having organised the first European Humanitarian Forum to be held from 21 to 23 March 2022 together with the European Commission.

In the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, many factors contribute to possible successes. The French Republic decided to focus on the matter of women in this paper who play an important role – firstly because they are a vulnerable group greatly affected by armed conflict and secondly because women participation in operations makes them more effective. Whenever women are involved in peacekeeping, the population as a whole can better be accessed, trust is built easier and programs like the construction of protection sites can better meet women's needs. Female peacekeeping staff is especially important when it comes to improving the persecution of sexual abuse – most cases of sexual violence go unpunished because women refuse to complain in fear of repercussions and social stigma. To achieve greater women participation, the French Republic suggests widening the global outreach campaign "The Global Call" by the Secretary-General that aims at improving women's representation at UN top civilian senior leadership level. However, women are needed in every level, not only the leadership. Therefore, the campaign should address all levels of peacekeeping staff. Other than on the leadership level, the call could be facilitated on national level to assemble more diverse national peacekeeping troops and should prioritize women when several candidates offer the same qualifications. In addition, it must be ensured that victims of sexual violence are protected when acting against their perpetrators. The chain of silence must be broken through protection of the victims and educational work to reduce the social stigma. To review the current process, we suggest assembling a team of five woman experts in every Member State – preferably partly made up of women who experienced sexual violence themselves – for the duration of six months. With the results of that review, the protection on women who speak up against their perpetrators should be improved. France also invites fellow Member States to contribute to the fund it founded to support women's movements in countries of the South in order to strengthen their role in society. The French Republic is convinced of the concept of the European Humanitarian Forum and proposes establishing a similar event following the European example in every region of the world – knowing that a big problem in the protection of civilians lies with states' and armed groups' lack of compliance with international law.