

**Delegation from the Republic of Ghana**  
***Position Paper for the Security Council***

The issues before the Security Council are: Impact of COVID-19 on Peace and Security and Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts. The Republic of Ghana reiterates her commitment to enhance global peace and security and overcome global crises through international cooperation. In the words of President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, “we in Ghana highly resolve that we will continue to defend democracy and constitutional rule and uphold human rights.”

**I. Impact of COVID-19 on Peace and Security**

The Republic of Ghana notes with great concern that the COVID-19 pandemic threatens the political and economic stability of various countries. On the one hand, peacebuilding processes and democratic transitions are currently being neglected due to the focus on public health. On the other hand, the ineffectiveness of measures to prevent the transmission of the virus and the stagnating distribution of COVID-19 vaccines especially in African countries deteriorate the popularity of elected governments and enable rebels to overturn them and postpone elections to consolidate their power. Consequently, a strong correlation between the transmission of the virus and unstable democratic governance can be noticed. Ghana perceives the recent military coups and jihadist attacks in some African countries as a threat to each African state's peace and territorial integrity. We are furthermore alarmed by the lack of willingness to enhance global cooperation and support countries most affected by the pandemic. However, conflict, national debt through economic recessions and the unimpeded transmission of the virus due to violent conflict and vaccine inequity sooner or later affect all Member States, allowing new variants to evolve and cause new waves of infection. Given that two of the current variants designated variants of concern by the World Health Organization (WHO) were first detected on the African continent, Ghana deems it crucial that all Member States commit to enhanced support for African countries. We remind all Member States that independent from nationality, it is human beings who suffer, and it is time to truly respect their dignity as expressed in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948).

The Republic of Ghana supports the *United Nations (UN) Comprehensive Response to COVID-19*, highlighting the importance of the principle of leaving no-one behind, though regretting the lack of implementation. In adopting General Assembly (GA) resolution 74/274 (2020), improved access to medical equipment and international cooperation were agreed upon. African states must not be excluded. Similar basic objectives and requirements such as the need for COVID-19 vaccine equity, as expressed in Security Council (SC) resolution 2565 (2021), are equally considered essential. We express support to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the extension of Special Drawing Rights (SDR) allocations as well as the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the WHO and their co-leaders for their efforts regarding the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX). Nevertheless, there are still too many low-income countries with vaccination rates hardly reaching five percent. In addition to that, the respective countries often struggle with political and socio-economic instability. GA resolution 74/270 (2020) already condemned racism, xenophobia and other human rights violations in the COVID-19 response and therefore laid the foundation for combating the abuse of power and lack of rule of law. While highly appreciating the repeated call for a global ceasefire in said resolution, which had initially been made by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in March 2020, Ghana is afraid that its implementation seems nearly impossible in light of the amount and complexity of conflicts, some of which directly benefit from pandemic-related state instability.

The Republic of Ghana recommends paying more attention to the impact of COVID-19 on human rights violations and the use of force destabilizing states. We call for joint action by the SC and the AU Peace and Security Council to monitor the progress in stabilizing democracy in African countries and to further invest in local capacities for the prevention of military coups during the pandemic. Since populations in Africa mainly regard coups as an answer to unpopular governments, it firstly needs to be ensured that despite the current and all future health emergency situations, elections are transparent and held timely and secondly, that no constitutional changes can be made by elected governments helping them serve illegitimate additional terms. The transparency and accountability of governments is to be monitored by UN observers sent by the SC and the AU to the respective country. In order to ensure peaceful and mutually agreed interaction with locals, the observers' impartiality and non-interference in any affairs of the state in question are to be declared before sending them. The gathered data shall be reported to the SC and the UN Secretary-General biannually. Although Ghana insists that any state receive the

financial and material support needed to overcome this crisis, we highlight the fact that not charity but assistance and cooperation can bring about a durable improvement and it is local institutions that need to be empowered and equipped in the long run.

## II. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts

At least 100 civilians die in armed conflict every day globally. Although the protection of civilians in armed conflict (POC) has been on the agenda of the SC in its current form for more than twenty years, the number of casualties worldwide is still alarming, and experts have observed increasing numbers since the rise of COVID-19. Despite not being directly affected by armed conflict, the Republic of Ghana deeply regrets the aggravation of civilian security in her closest neighboring countries. Particularly in countries with limited economic stability and persistent humanitarian inequality, women and children as well as marginalized people face the highest risks of being exposed to violence during armed conflicts. Progress has been made in peacekeeping operations through UN regulations aiming at eradicating exploitation and abuse by restricting casual interaction with civilians. However, peacekeeping missions often still have a one-sided focus on the main actors involved in the conflict, putting POC in the second place. Ghana is convinced that this not only derives from a lack of capacities regarding food and medical systems but also from little training of peacekeepers and the underrepresentation of women among them. Moreover, infrastructure and shelter areas for POC are often only taken into account by state authorities when violent attacks related to the conflict already obstruct their safe establishment. Therefore, a stronger focus on prevention and pre-emption of attacks against civilians is of utmost importance.

In the *Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War* (1949), the international community proclaimed fundamental regulations for POC, which became part of international law in 1993. SC resolution 1265 (1999) was the first document to officially include POC into the UN peacekeeping framework and therefore constitutes a benchmark on the subject. Ghana highlights the need to particularly address the special protection of women, children and other vulnerable groups as expressed in SC resolution 1296 (2000). Also of great relevance is SC resolution 1674 (2006), which further condemns impunity, sexual violence and violence against children. The *Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians*, drafted at the *High-Level International Conference on the Protection of Civilians* (2015), lay a substantial foundation for the performance of UN peacekeeping missions. However, peacekeeping missions often still face immense challenges necessitating a more specific approach. Apart from her permanent mission to the UN, Ghana also shows strong commitment to POC through her support for the *Draft Guidelines for the Protection of Civilians in African Union Peace Support Operations* (2012). All Member States are encouraged to take these guidelines into account when drafting future resolutions and policies as they contain important suggestions for the required training and the distribution of tasks among external actors and host-state authorities. As a country with a comparatively low median age, Ghana highly appreciates the recent adoption of SC resolution 2601 (2021), which focuses on the security of schools, teachers and children in war zones. Children and their education must not be victims of armed conflicts that were sometimes even initiated prior to their birth. Deeming public awareness of civilian casualties of war crucial to any progress in the matter, Ghana highlights the success of the *#NotATarget campaign* first launched by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on the *World Humanitarian Day* in 2017.

Emphasizing the need to address the situation of vulnerable groups and women in armed conflicts, Ghana strongly promotes increasing women's integration into POC, since it boosts efficacy and sustainability and helps guarantee casual interaction of peacekeepers with civilians free of violence against female civilians, children and vulnerable groups. Future peacekeeping missions conducted by the UN and regional organizations such as the AU are to include a set number of female personnel. Beside women's critical role in negotiation processes, their main function should be to mediate between local civil society groups and representatives from vulnerable groups on one side and combatants and peacekeepers on the other side. The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will be tasked to coordinate training for those women mediators and shall be supported by OCHA. To further ameliorate the protection of vulnerable civilian groups and women, Ghana demands that before conducting future peacekeeping operations, the responsible organization or body always present detailed information on the planned integration and consideration of these groups in POC. The integration, however, can only be realized if host governments commit to granting responsibility and financial aid to local communities, who then play a key role in encouraging interaction and cooperation between vulnerable groups and external peacekeepers.