

Delegation from Norway
Position Paper for the Security Council

The issues at hand for the United Nation's Security Council in alphabetical order are the impact of COVID-19 on peace and security, as well as the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Whenever dealing with any issues, the Security Council should adhere to its mandate as statuted in Chapter V Article 23 ff. of the Charter of the United Nations.

I. Impact of COVID-19 on Peace and Security

Ever since spring 2020 there has hardly been a topic more on people's minds around the world than COVID-19 and its consequences. While most of the public life came to a standstill in western countries, armed conflicts did not come to a halt but instead further strained.

According to the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) 56 active conflicts were recorded in 2020 which is even a slight increase compared to 2019. The Kingdom of Norway firmly believes that with regard to the pandemic, it has become evident that the world is faced with a global crisis and thus requires global solutions and cooperation. While it at first may seem like a complex and challenging task when keeping in mind the progress with regard to the climate crisis, COVID-19 and the fast development and production of vaccines did prove this is not an idealistic scenario.

Norway is convinced that the vaccination is the most effective resource currently available to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it must be a priority to ensure a sufficient accessibility in all member states for its citizens to the various vaccines. In a first continental effort Norway has donated over 800,000 vaccine doses within a bilateral collaborative effort with the European Commission (EC) in 2021. However, it has become apparent that particularly conflict-affected countries outside of Europe experience a shortage of vaccine doses. In order to counter this state and facilitate the process of increasing access to vaccinations the COVAX initiative should be strengthened.

While Norway plans to contribute approximately 30 million vaccine doses internationally the Norwegian Government set itself a target in spring 2021 to donate an amount of at least five million vaccines by producers such as but not limited to Moderna and AstraZeneca throughout the course of the year. This demand has already been successfully met in November 2021 without causing any disruption or delays to the national vaccination campaign in Norway proving that a fundamental lack of support or assistance towards the COVAX initiative under the pretence that respective governments aim to first focus on national vaccination efforts seem disputable.

Additionally to vaccines, Norway is also aware that another way of easing the impact of COVID-19 within countries with an armed conflict is through assistance from the tech field. As such, the pandemic development in the Republic of Korea has shown that it allows an efficient monitoring in order to immediately detect and contain outbreaks. Considering that many conflict-affected countries may lack the sufficient infrastructure needed, the Government of Norway aims to support the financing, development and distribution of health technologies should the respective markets be unable to deliver them themselves. It is necessary to keep in mind that due to low vaccination rates in some countries, COVID-19 variants additionally to Delta or Omicron could develop and swiftly spread in other countries as well. These new and unknown variants could potentially prove themselves to be more resistant to vaccines. Therefore, Norway believes a more profound joint effort will benefit not only all members of the Security Council, but instead the world as a whole in both short and long term.

Furthermore Norway is convinced that international cooperation is also crucial when it comes to the implementation of a global ceasefire. Within this process, the Security Council and all its members must recognize the high responsibility and act upon it. Norway is noting with regret that in May 2020 the United States of America blocked a vote over reference to the World Health Organization (WHO) while the Russian Federation blocked United Nations relief agencies from funding health services at the border between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Republic of Iraq. Norway strongly encourages all members of the Security Council to approach this important step of ensuring a more peaceful world with a cooperative spirit.

II. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts

Regardless where an armed conflict takes place or who the involved key actors are, it has become evident that civilians are finding themselves in a similar precarious situation every time: they are continuously under the risk of being involved in military confrontations or even are deliberately targeted by either the government or forces belonging to opposition or rebels.

Norway is alarmed by the aforementioned threat civilians encounter and wants to stress that the Security Council must ensure the most vulnerable are protected.

The importance of work provided by medical and healthcare facilities has become more evident throughout the global COVID-19 pandemic, however especially in a conflict where casualties, injuries and psychological trauma may occur on a daily basis it is particularly indispensable. Therefore Norway draws attention to international humanitarian law (IHL) which states that attacks against facilities and personnel offering medical and healthcare are prohibited.

For the sake of guaranteeing said adherence, Norway calls for observers in affected countries to closely monitor any developments in this regard. Following the occurrence of a potential violation, information should be submitted to the United Nations in order to proceed with an investigation which must be impartial and thorough.

Norway emphasises it is necessary to establish precedent and those committing violations of IHL must be held accountable through reliable and valid national or international criminal justice systems.

Norway also voices its concern regarding the increase of distrust of civilians towards international aid workers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In order to be more trustworthy and reliable, Norway considers it to be a necessity to closely analyse past humanitarian missions and to identify potential grievances or shortcomings.

In the context of the protection of civilians, Norway considers the risk of food security to be of utmost importance and draws attention to resolution 2417 in which the Security Council has recognised the connection between conflict and food insecurity. While the awareness that conflict-induced food insecurity does pose a threat to international peace and security is a significant first step, Norway believes further action is necessary. Norway also applauds all fellow members of the Group of Friends of Action on Conflict and Hunger who share a similar notion as stated in a joint statement on 4 October 2021.

Norway calls on any and all conflict parties to spare infrastructure required for production and distribution of food. In due consideration of the fact that a majority of the ongoing armed conflicts are not international armed conflicts (IAC) Norway wishes to thank Switzerland for the amendment to the Rome Statute in 2019 making starvation now a war crime punishable before the International Criminal Court (ICC) when committed in a non-international conflict (NIAC). While the amendment was adopted unanimously in December 2019 by the Assembly of States, it still needs to be ratified.

In Norway, the legislator has already amended the Norwegian Penal Code in 2008 which made the required changes in § 106(b). Norway urges all countries to ratify the amendment and to make an important contribution in ensuring that war crimes are not with impunity.