

La Présidente du Conseil de sécurité présente ses compliments aux membres du Conseil et a l'honneur de transmettre, pour information, le texte **d'une lettre datée du 1 mai 2023**, adressée au Secrétaire général, **par le Représentant permanent de la Suisse auprès de l'Organisation des Nations Unies**, ainsi que la pièce qui y est jointe.

Cette lettre et la pièce qui y est jointe seront publiées comme document du Conseil de sécurité sous la cote S/2023/307.

Le 2 mai 2023

The President of the Security Council presents his compliments to the members of the Council and has the honour to transmit herewith, for their information, a copy of a **letter dated 1 May 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations** addressed to the Secretary-General, and its enclosure.

This letter and its enclosure will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2023/307.

2 May 2023

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF LETTER TO FOLLOW



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Mission permanente de la Suisse auprès des Nations Unies

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New York, le 1^{er} mai 2023

Excellence,

J'ai l'honneur de vous informer que, sous la présidence de la Suisse, le Conseil de sécurité prévoit de tenir un débat public de haut niveau sur le thème "Garantir la sécurité et la dignité des civils dans les conflits : Agir contre l'insécurité alimentaire et protéger les services essentiels" dans le cadre du point de l'ordre du jour "La protection des civils touchés par des conflits armés". Le débat public aura lieu le mardi 23 mai à 10 heures HNE et sera présidé par S.E. Alain Berset, Président de la Confédération suisse.

Je vous prie de bien vouloir trouver ci-joint une note conceptuelle destinée à guider les discussions sur le sujet du débat. Je vous serais reconnaissant de bien vouloir circuler la présente lettre et son annexe en tant que document officiel du Conseil de sécurité.

Veuillez agréer, Excellence, l'assurance de ma très haute considération.

Pascale Baeriswyl
Représentante permanente de la Suisse auprès des Nations Unies

S.E. M. António Guterres
Secrétaire général
United Nations
New York





Concept Note

Annual Security Council Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

23 May 2023

**“Ensuring the security and dignity of civilians in conflict:
Addressing food insecurity and protecting essential services”**

1. Introduction and objective

The annual report of the Secretary-General on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (PoC) will focus, among others, on conflict-induced food insecurity and related challenges such as the protection of critical civilian infrastructure and essential services. As President of the Security Council for the month of May 2023, Switzerland will hold a high-level open debate to discuss how to address these intertwined challenges.

This meeting will provide an opportunity for the Security Council and the wider membership to take stock of the implementation of UNSC resolution [2417](#) (2018) pertaining to conflict and hunger five years after its unanimous adoption. Given the grim situation of the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, the session will also look at the challenges related to the protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population such as those essential for food production and distribution, water and sanitation, energy and health care, and other related civilian infrastructure, and of essential service personnel, as foreseen by UNSC resolution [2573](#) (2021).

Member States are thus invited to share their views on the challenges and good practices, including preventive and preparedness measures on how to better ensure the survival, the security and the dignity of the civilian population in times of conflict. The open debate will also highlight concrete steps to ensure compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) by all parties to armed conflicts and measures to be taken by the Security Council, Member States, the UN, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and other actors.

2. Background

Civilians continue to bear the brunt of armed conflicts. Direct and indirect effects of hostilities on food systems and water infrastructure, as well as lack of access to safe water, sanitation and health care, and displacement, are contributing towards increasing levels of malnutrition, acute food insecurity, and the probability of famine. In many of the most vulnerable contexts, these may be exacerbated by the adverse effects of climate change. Food insecurity is at an unprecedented height, with conflict remaining the main driver of food insecurity. According to WFP and FAO, 70 % of the world's population experiencing acute hunger are in conflict-affected areas.¹

The respect of IHL is crucial to prevent hunger in conflict situations, and to protect the civilian population and civilian objects in general. It mitigates the negative impacts of armed conflict on civilians, in particular in the conduct of hostilities. For example, disruption of agricultural production and distribution systems can cause abandonment of crops and livestock and result in food shortages. Importantly, IHL prohibits starvation of civilians as a method of warfare. It grants special protection to objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population.

Rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access must also be facilitated and allowed according to IHL. This is particularly important, when parties to armed conflicts are unable or unwilling to meet the needs of the civilian population. Furthermore, the protection of the natural environment in armed conflicts as a civilian object is also crucial to prevent and mitigate impacts of conflict on food insecurity.

¹ WFP and FAO. 2022. *Hunger Hotspots. FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity: October 2022 to January 2023 Outlook*. Rome.

The protection of civilians in armed conflict is a key aspect of international peace and security. The Security Council has an important responsibility in ensuring the survival, the security and the dignity of civilians in conflict. Conflict and hunger remain high on the agenda of the UNSC, since the adoption of UNSC 2417 (2018). This resolution recalls the link between armed conflict and food insecurity, including the threat of famine, and condemns the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare. It also highlights the pivotal role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, in peacebuilding as well as in the need to increase their role in related decision-making.

In 2021, the Security Council further unanimously adopted UNSR resolution 2573 recognizing the interconnectedness of certain essential services and condemning, among others, unlawful attacks against and misuse of objects critical to the delivery or essential services to the civilian population. This includes those services that are key for the provision of water and sanitation, energy and food production and distribution. The resolution also condemns the unlawful denial of humanitarian access resulting in the deprivation for the civilian population of objects indispensable to their survival. Furthermore, it recognizes the importance of these objects for the survival of the civilian population, hence confirming its specific protection under IHL.

These resolutions are important milestones, shedding light on the urgent need to better protect civilians and ensure their survival in security and dignity.

3. Guiding questions

- How can the Security Council, UN Member States and all parties to conflict promote a more systematic implementation of existing frameworks and instruments, including resolution 2417 (2018) and resolution 2573 (2021), to address conflict-induced food insecurity and to protect essential services?
- What other relevant risks does the Security Council need to address to enhance food security and the protection of essential services?
- What are the challenges but also the good protection practices, including preventive and preparedness measures, to ensure the survival and dignity of the civilian population during armed conflict?
- What is the role of women in addressing food insecurity and protecting essential services? How can the agency of women be leveraged, be it as duty bearers or as affected individuals?
- How can Member States, the UN system, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations contribute to an enhanced respect for IHL in relation to the protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, including essential civilian infrastructures but also tackling food insecurity?

4. Participation and format

This meeting will be held in the format of an open debate at the level of Heads of State and Government. It will be chaired by the President of the Swiss Confederation, H.E. Mr. Alain Berset.

Member States wishing to participate in-person should inscribe their names on the list of speakers through the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE+. A letter addressed to the President of the Security Council, duly signed by the Permanent Representative or the Chargé d'affaires a.i., requesting to participate in accordance with Rule 37 of the Council's Provisional Rules of Procedure must be uploaded to the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE+. Inscription for said meeting will open on **18 May 2023 at 9:30 a.m.**

The Presidency encourages the participation of as many Member States as possible. Statements or interventions should, however, not exceed three (3) minutes.

Briefers

- Secretary-General of the United Nations
- President of the International Committee of the Red Cross
- Civil society representative (tbc)

