



UNITED STATES MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement of the United States of America
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Agenda Item 82 – Protection of Diplomats
Statement by Stephen Townley, Counsellor
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The rules protecting the sanctity of ambassadors, other diplomats, and consular officials enable them to carry out their vital functions. Respect for these rules is a basic prerequisite for the normal conduct of relations among states.

It is also critical to protect diplomats from harmful acts by non state actors. In recent years, attacks on diplomatic and consular officials have increased in number, more often involving non state armed groups, and have become if anything more brazen. In early 2015, the United States temporarily relocated all of our personnel out of Yemen due to the ongoing violence there. In April of that year, a car bomb detonated outside the U.S. Consulate General in Erbil, Iraq, killing two Turkish citizens and wounding a number of others. There have been a number of other attacks on our facilities and personnel around the world. Nor is the United States alone in this regard. These brutal acts by armed groups should be universally condemned.

We look forward to our discussion this year, to reemphasize the importance of these issues.

The steps that are appropriate to protect a mission, and that are therefore required of the receiving state, will depend on the potential threats to a particular mission in that state. Thus, as the facts and circumstances of attacks on diplomatic and consular personnel continue to change, so too must our preventive measures. For our part, we place an emphasis on enhanced security training and good personal security practices to help mitigate the risks our personnel face every day. But prevention is also facilitated by collaboration. Thus, our embassies overseas often work with local law enforcement and other authorities to prepare for eventualities, for instance by conducting drills and sharing information when appropriate.

Mr. Chairman, all of us in this room have a personal stake in diplomatic protection. But the world also has a vital stake in the protection of diplomats, because diplomacy is the foundation of international relations. There are forces in this world that wish harm to diplomats. We all must stand united against them. And we can start by continuing to develop means to prevent violence before it occurs.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.