

Closing Remarks – Global Protection Forum 2021 Session on Protection of Civilians

William Chemaly, Global Protection Cluster Coordinator, 27 October 2021, 1400

We face a waterfall of crises accumulating to one big coping crisis.

Yet out of all drivers of crisis, conflict remains the uncontested major cause of protection risks and concerns

Military coups. Force to seize power. New arms race is back. Nuclear risk is at its highest level in almost four decades as warned by the UNSG.

He added, last year, military spending as a share of gross domestic product saw its largest annual increase since 2009. It is now approaching \$2 trillion annually

While the big picture is worrying due to how clear it is.

The individual level picture is in many ways more worrying because how unclear it is.

Invisible -- actually -- as we described in our latest Global Protection Update.

In many cases, civilians that need protection are invisible.

Invisible in their communities, invisible to services of authorities, invisible to peace processes, invisible to political solutions.

Now we have come together today heard today how we as a cluster and members are contributing to protection of civilians.

Across all interventions we heard a call to action on three simple matters.

1- we need to bring back the notion of protection by presence

2- we need to rely more and invest better in community-based protection

3- we must continue emphasising the importance of protection services when we are negotiating for access.

We have good news with the new OCHA leadership and reinvigorated focus on humanitarian diplomacy and access negotiation. We in the cluster will do all what we can to support this drive.

We live in an open world. People hear our voice. People also hear our silence.

A loud voice advocating for protection of civilians might limit our access once. But our silence might make our access amputated for ever.

Access with silence might bring food and plastic sheet but risks to leave behind hope. It might bring water but risks to leave behind acknowledgement of the injustice.

Sometimes people we are accessing are left with nothing but their story. We have no right to take that away from them. Lets not.

But this is where it takes a whole community, where we complement each other.

Some drive trucks, some deliver services, some negotiate behind closed doors, some tell the story publicly.

We need all these pieces.

This is why there is a cluster.

Because one approach is never enough.

We in the GPC commit to keep bringing together the community and all approaches for one protection outcome.