

**Statement of H.E. Jānis Mažeiks,
Permanent Representative of Latvia to the United Nations
On behalf of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania
at the 9th informal interactive dialogue of the UN General Assembly on
the Responsibility to Protect
New York, 6 September 2017**

Mr. President,

I am honored to speak **on behalf of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia**. [We also align with the statement of the European Union.]

We thank the UN Secretary-General for the ninth report on this important topic. We fully support his recommendation to do better to implement the responsibility to protect (R2P) in practice by strengthening accountability for prevention. Implementation of R2P goes hand in hand with his broader appeal for peace and prevention of conflicts.

There is broad international consensus about why R2P matters, but **considerable difficulties in the implementation of this concept remain**. Not only at national level, but also we, the international community, often fail collectively to take the necessary steps to protect populations from the worst crimes. Conflicts and mass atrocity crimes put a devastating toll upon humanity. Senseless human suffering must never become acceptable.

Therefore we, the Member States, and the international community as a whole, must **translate our words of commitment into practice**.

Prevention of mass atrocity crimes and protection of civilians is the **primary responsibility of individual States**. We see it as accountability of authorities to their people, and of individual States to the international community. Success of R2P can be only as strong as the domestic capacity – accountable, political leadership and strong institutions, and respect for the rule of law.

Preventive tools are at our disposal; they just need to be used when risks of atrocity crimes occur. By fully implementing the 2030 Agenda, we can mitigate the root causes of conflicts. We must learn how to translate early warning signs into timely preventive action. For us, human rights, good governance and the rule of law are central in conflict prevention. We appreciate

the work of civil society and media in increasing public awareness about serious crimes and human rights violations.

Early action and response of the UN is critical for the R2P implementation. We commend the persistent work of the UN Special Adviser to advance the R2P agenda across the UN system.

The Security Council has a special responsibility to take timely and decisive action to prevent the outbreak of brutality against innocent people. Unfortunately, on many occasions the privilege of the veto has been abused and left the Council paralyzed. We therefore support the proposal to voluntarily restrain the use of the veto at the Security Council in situations involving mass atrocity crimes, and the Code of Conduct for any member of the Council not to vote against any action designed to end and prevent mass atrocity crimes.

Ensuring **accountability for mass atrocity crimes** is the best way to prevent recurrence of such crimes. Our countries are strong supporters of the work of the International Criminal Court. Referrals to ICC by the UN Security Council are necessary when there is evidence that atrocity crimes are being committed with impunity. Cooperation by States is crucial to the success of the ICC. Another important aspect is to activate the Kampala Amendments to the Rome Statute on the crime of aggression by the end of this year.

Mr. President,

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania remain **committed to the implementation of the responsibility to protect**. We call on other UN Member States to uphold this important political commitment.

We also support a **formal General Assembly debate on the R2P** in the future.

Thank you.