

Statement delivered by Belgium – Informal Interactive Dialogue on R2P, 6 September 2016
[TRANSLATION]

Mr. Chair,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Special commissioners,

I would like to thank the Chair of the General Assembly for the organization of this dialogue. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his excellent report, which underlines the importance of acting together to prevent and fight the most serious crimes.

Belgium aligns itself fully with the statement made by the European Union, as well as that by the Group of Friends of the R2P. Nevertheless I wish to briefly speak in my national capacity on several points.

1. Development of the concept of R2P

As the Secretary-General rightly mentioned it, we must acknowledge that some theoretical issues related to the concept of Responsibility to Protect could be further explored. However, this must not prevent us from already shifting from development to implementation.

The concept of Responsibility to Protect, including the three pillars, are not called into question. We all agree on the basic principles of this concept which we unanimously adopted in 2005. We also confirmed and referred to the concept in many resolution in both the General Assembly and the Security Council. Therefore, why should we not add R2P to the General Assembly agenda so as to reaffirm our determination to implement the Responsibility to Protect and to overcome our differences? We could ask ourselves what would prevent us from discussing the implementation and operationalization of R2P in a more formal context than this one. We invite all Member States to support this call.

2. Combatting impunity

The effective pursuit of those suspected of having committed crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity of war crimes must be a priority for each country for the international community and for the Security Council in particular. The pursuit for each of these crimes is first of all a duty towards the victims. Moreover, ensuring perpetrators' criminal responsibility will have a preventive effect and will contribute in rebuilding societies.

So as to give States a practical tool allowing them both to adhere to their international obligations and to render their national legal systems more effective, Argentina, Belgium, Netherlands and Slovenia proposed to open negotiations on a multilateral treaty for mutual legal and extradition assistance in order to facilitate in practice the cooperation among States who undertake investigations and prosecutions of crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. At the same time, we encourage all Member States to ratify the Rome Statute and to cooperate with the International Criminal Court and other international tribunals.

I also wish to inform you that during the high-level week, Belgium, Uruguay, the Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide and the Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect will organize a ministerial side event on ending impunity from which Daesh benefits.

3. Institutional capacity and political will

I wish to conclude my statement by highlighting that the credibility of our collective action depends greatly on our political will and our ability to respond to risks. Therefore, it is absolutely crucial that we continually develop our institutional readiness at the national, regional and global levels, particularly in the crucial stages of the early prevention and rapid responses to warning signs.

Two brief remarks in this regard:

- After the many attacks committed around the world, including in my country, it is unnecessary here to recall that we need to increase investment in prevention strategies against atrocity crimes and violent extremism. I wish to reaffirm that Belgium has always undertaken its responsibilities in this area and will continue to do so with strength and determination. In this regard, we will organize, alongside with the EU and Jordan, another ministerial side event called "*Global Efforts in Integrating a Youth Dimension in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism*" on Thursday September 22.
- Finally, I wish to highlight the Secretary-General's *Human Rights Up Front* initiative as well as the *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes*, which are both useful tools to improve our capacities with regard to early warning and prevention of atrocities.

Despite those institutional capacities, we are still too often too slow to react. On the international level, it takes too much time to agree on the best way to interpret warning signals and even more to agree on how the international community should act on it. The discussion on these issues must go on. In this context, we reaffirm our support to the ACT Code of Conduct and the French-Mexican Initiative on veto restraint.