

Statement by Denmark at the General Assembly dialogue on the responsibility to protect (R2P)

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Statement by H.E. Ambassador Mr. Ib Petersen, Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations, at the informal interactive dialogue on the report of the Secretary General entitled "Fulfilling our collective responsibility: international assistance and the responsibility to protect", 8 September 2014.

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Denmark welcomes the July 2014 report of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect and its focus on assistance and the collective responsibility to prevent and halt mass atrocity crimes. We also want to thank the Joint Office of the Special Advisers on R2P and the Prevention of Genocide for their valuable work. We align ourselves with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union as well as with the statement delivered by Rwanda on behalf of the group of friends of R2P.

Since our informal debate last year new developments have only further underlined the significance of the Responsibility to Protect and the challenges we face in living up to the commitment our government leaders made in 2005.

The daily reports of atrocity crimes committed in Syria, Iraq, Central African Republic and South Sudan are brutal reminders of the immense challenges in carrying out our collective responsibility to protect civilian populations.

In some places, as in Northern Iraq, the international community is responding to Iraq's call for assistance through provision of both humanitarian aid and military support. This is a clear example of R2P-assistance as discussed in the Secretary General's report. Denmark is among member states providing concrete support for these efforts.

In this context we welcome the Security Council resolution adopted in April this year which reaffirmed the responsibility to protect. We call upon the Security Council to be consistently guided by R2P and for its permanent members to refrain from blocking Council action that aims to prevent or stop relevant atrocity crimes.

The Secretary General is right in pointing out in his report that we need to move the principle of R2P from the realm of rhetoric into concrete action. We need less talk and more action in terms of actual protection. Prevention is key. States must assume their collective responsibility to prevent mass atrocities and where possible assist other States in need of help, including through development cooperation.

Denmark appreciates that the report again highlights the National Focal Points Network as an important vehicle to assist each other in advancing our efforts on preventing mass atrocities. The appointment of a National R2P Focal Point is a step that can be implemented in all countries - big or small, rich or poor - to assess and address their respective needs in regard to mass atrocity prevention.

The R2P Focal Point Network was launched in 2010 by the governments of Denmark and Ghana along with the governments of Costa Rica and Australia. All Member States working towards the prevention of mass atrocities are invited to join the Network. Currently, more than 40 states have appointed focal points and we encourage all States as well as regional organizations to join.

Let me conclude by looking ahead. 2015 will mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the World Summit Outcome Document. This provides a natural opportunity for the General Assembly to take stock of efforts to implement the Responsibility to Protect and what needs to be improved. In this context we think time has come to consider how we can reaffirm our commitment to prevent R2P crimes – and that is why we also support the proposal to discuss incorporating R2P on our formal agenda.