



Statement on behalf of The Group of Friends on the Responsibility to Protect at the Thematic Event Convened by the President of the General Assembly “From Commitment to Implementation: Ten Years of the Responsibility to Protect”

Mr. President of the General Assembly,

I have the honor of delivering this statement on behalf of the 50 Members of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), co-chaired by the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Rwanda.

The Group of Friends thanks the President of the General Assembly for convening this important event to mark the beginning of the second decade of the Responsibility to Protect.

Mr. President, the adoption of R2P at the United Nations (UN) World Summit in 2005 was an historic commitment to prevent and protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The Group of Friends reaffirms its enduring commitment to paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document on the Responsibility to Protect.

We welcome the considerable and undeniable progress that has been made since the 2005 World Summit in the development and institutionalization of the Responsibility to Protect. Many member states, as well as regional and sub-regional organizations, have made considerable strides in upholding the Responsibility to Protect.

We have recognized that truly meeting our responsibilities requires us to employ a broad range of political and diplomatic efforts on a case-by-case basis. Recognizing that impunity may fuel further atrocities, the pursuit of accountability for crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide must form part of such efforts.

We note that 51 countries and the European Union have appointed National Focal Points as part of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points, and encourage all Member States to join this growing Global Network.

From the establishment of the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and R2P to the development of the *Human Rights up Front* Action Plan, the UN Secretariat has also enhanced its capacity to address atrocity crimes. We encourage all states to support the work of the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and R2P, and welcome the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes, which can be a useful guide for assessing the risk of atrocity crimes. The Group of Friends also welcomes the role of civil society in assisting Member States to uphold the Responsibility to Protect.

The UN Security Council has adopted 43 resolutions referencing R2P, including 13 in 2015 – the most ever in one year. The Human Rights Council has also referenced R2P in 14 of its resolutions. We further applaud the launch of the Group of Friends of R2P in Geneva, and look forward to joining efforts to strengthen the links between New York and Geneva for prevention.

While we highlight and mark these important strides, we must also lament on our collective failures to fully and effectively uphold R2P. Acts that may constitute genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity are currently occurring in many crises around world. We have also witnessed the rise of non-State armed groups that seek to spread their violent extremism and perpetrate atrocity crimes as a matter of policy.

In our collective attempts to confront these atrocities, R2P has never been more relevant. As we begin the second decade of R2P, we must urgently move from commitment to implementation.

Paragraph 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document stressed the need for the General Assembly to continue consideration of R2P. In this regard, the Group of Friends welcomes the draft UN General Assembly resolution on the Responsibility to Protect, circulated by Australia, Botswana, Brazil, Denmark, Ghana, Guatemala, the Republic of Korea and Slovenia.

We thank the members of this truly cross-regional group for their efforts, and welcome its efforts to work toward a balanced text which emphasizes the importance of prevention and the inter-connection between R2P, peacebuilding and the broader human rights and civilian protection agendas. We also welcome the strong support of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect.

The Group of Friends believes that now is an opportune time for the General Assembly to assume this responsibility by considering the adoption of a resolution that supports R2P and moves it on to the formal agenda.

We understand that there may be outstanding issues held by Member States regarding the implementation of R2P, on a case-by-case basis. By moving R2P onto the formal agenda we firmly believe these substantive issues will be discussed in a comprehensive manner taking into consideration the crucial and diverse views of the entire membership of the United Nations.

The Group of Friends therefore emphasizes the importance of considering this resolution, and encourages all member states to do the same.

Finally, we welcome the first ever Arria Formula meeting of the UN Security Council on the Responsibility to Protect and non-state armed groups held on 14 December 2015. R2P places a particular responsibility on the members of the Security Council. The Group of Friends advocates for timely and decisive action by the Security Council in order to prevent or end atrocity crimes.

We recommend more frequent and regularized briefings to the Council by the Special Advisers on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, and also encourage the Security Council to convene a meeting to discuss R2P and mass atrocity prevention in 2016.

By way of conclusion, Mr. President, the Group of Friends has three questions for the esteemed panelists on accelerating the implementation of R2P:

- 1) How can the UN and its member states increase political support and political will to implement the Responsibility to Protect?
- 2) In terms national capacities, what are some of the most effective measures member states can take to strengthen their own resilience to mass atrocity crimes? And what regional or international support might be best merited to support this?
- 3) Regarding protecting civilians, ten out of sixteen UN peace operations currently have this function at the core of their mandates. How can the United Nations tangibly strengthen the protection of civilians, particularly from atrocity crimes like those under the R2P framework, in the context of these operations?

I thank you, once again, Mr. President of the General Assembly.